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The main points
At the end, he clearly thought he'd done extremely well, and no doubt everyone he met yesterday told him the same. As he might say himself, he had spat on the boots of malign fate. It certainly was no disaster; like many of Mr Major's speeches it was just odd, disconcertingly strange, faintly weird, peculiar."

30,471

Saturday October 14 1995

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
46,372

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'All elections are important but the next is a watershed because whoever wins will inherit the strongest economy for decades'

'My father made garden ornaments and some fashionable people find that very funny. I don't.'

'We stand for a wise and kindly way of life that is rooted in our history. Our hopes for our country are not tired.'

'The party is united... beat Labour one more time and you've beaten socialism out of this country for ever'

PM launches 'fight of our lives'

Counter-attack cheers the faithful

Michael White
Political Editor

JOHN Major yesterday launched his counter-offensive against Tony Blair in a Tory conference speech which sought to reclaim the political middle ground while accusing New Labour of still being hopelessly behind fast-changing challenges in the global economy.

In his attempt to snatch a fifth Tory general election victory, the Prime Minister unveiled a strategy to make Britain the "Enterprise Centre for Europe" - in contrast to what he insisted were the Labour modernisers' outdated views on economic management.

Raising his game to galvanise activists for the uphill contest ahead, Mr Major declared: "All elections are important, but the next is a watershed, because whoever wins will inherit the strongest economy for decades." Since the Tories had built it with no help from Labour, Mr Major said he would wage the "fight of our lives" to win.

Deriding "cradle to the grave socialism" which asked more than the state could or should provide, he proclaimed: "Beat Labour one more time and we've beaten socialism out of this country for good."

He continued: "I don't doubt Labour's good intentions: the road to hell is paved with Labour's good intentions," he told his 2,000-strong audience before accusing the Labour leader of changing every political principle - except his name.

In a 70-minute speech - the most effective of his five-year premiership and the first since 1992 to be free of a looming leadership crisis - Mr Major coupled political knockabout with a clutch of nearly-new policy initiatives.

They ranged from 5,000 extra police on the beat, 10,000 more street surveillance TV cameras and a British version of the FBI, to a doubling of the 70,000-strong assisted places scheme and a "contract for work" to "discipline" the unemployed. Muslims will be able to set up church schools, and holders of the Victoria Cross and George Cross will see their £100 a year stipend rise to £1,300.

There were also further strong, but unspecified, promises of tax cuts "when affordable" - including eventual abolition of capital gains and inheritance taxes which Downing Street is pressing on the Treasury as part of Mr Major's aim to drive public spending below 40 per cent of gross domestic product.

But despite combative policy pledges intended to put New Labour on the spot before a likely election in spring

1997, Mr Major refrained from the barely nationalistic rhetoric of cabinet colleagues like Michael Portillo.

In terms more balanced than most this week, Mr Major told activists that they should remember that most European Union states supporting federalism did so from a recent history of "war, dictatorship, civil war, military occupation". In contrast to undefeated Britain.

"If we want to persuade our partners that their policies for Europe are wrong - and I believe passionately that many of their policies are wrong - we must use our imagination to understand their feelings and their motives."

The response was muted until Mr Major said Britain had joined Europe for prosperity and cooperation - not for extra government and backdoor socialism. "And we did not enter it for a federal Europe, it would work for us. Our partners must understand that it's politically and constitutionally unacceptable. But that's what Labour would agree to," he declared.

Mr Major mixed his talk of Britain as Europe's low tax enterprise centre with tried and tested themes, including endorsement of Michael Howard's tough new sentencing policies and a fresh assault on what he claimed were Labour's "gerrymandering" devolution policies which would bring a "barbaric tax" to Scotland before eventually breaking up the Union.

The Blackpool conference rewarded Mr Major with the ritual six minutes of standing ovation and Land of Hope and Glory, leaving party business managers to return to London relieved that a potentially disastrous week had been salvaged and morale revived.

Senior colleagues praised Mr Major's speech as "a vision for the next century". Michael Heseltine, deputy prime minister, described it as "the speech of a prime minister rising above any sectional interest talking about the great opportunities for Britain". Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, contrasted it with Labour's "hollow sham of PR antics" last week.

Labour claimed the cost of what was presented as 14 new initiatives from Downing Street would be £5.6 billion, the equivalent of 5p on income tax. Having made such pledges as £100 million more for assisted places pupils and £100 million extra for the police, "they must now tell us what they will cut, what taxes they will raise or by what amount they will borrow to pay for it," said Andrew Smith, the shadow chief secretary.

Conservatives in Blackpool, page 7; Outlook, page 13; Leader comment, page 14; City Notebook, page 22



Flying the flag... John Major is mobbed by supporters after his fighting speech at the Tory party conference in Blackpool

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCFEE

The main points

- Aim to cut public spending below 40% of GDP.
- To eventually abolish inheritance and capital gains tax.
- 5,000 extra policemen to be recruited over three years.
- 10,000 more closed circuit TV cameras.
- An extra 30,000 assisted places at private schools.
- National police squad and MIS to fight organised crime.
- VC and GC holders' annual income increased from £100 to £1,300 a year.

"At the end, he clearly thought he'd done extremely well, and no doubt everyone he met yesterday told him the same. As he might say himself, he had spat on the boots of malign fate. It certainly was no disaster; like many of Mr Major's speeches it was just odd, disconcertingly strange, faintly weird, peculiar."

Simon Hoggart's Sketch, page 7

Major rescues a dismal week

Commentary

Hugo Young

JOHN MAJOR has always claimed he is the only man who could keep the Tory party together. Yesterday he showed he is the only man remotely fit to lead it. Five years on, the job may be slipping from him. But he gave notice of the fight he will make to keep the Tories in power - something no other member of the Cabinet would have a chance of doing.

He rescued a dismal week for the Conservative govern-

ing class. Most ministers have addressed the illusion that the Conservative Party endures, that it is the only audience that matters. Most people who came to Blackpool had lost all capacity to see the world as others see it. All the party wanted to hear, it seemed, was that Britain is the greatest British soldiers, British policemen, British capitalists, British culture: all were, thanks to Tories, the finest in the world.

This was a narrow, self-referential, often nauseating, usually infantile parade. From Michael Portillo to Kenneth Clarke, we heard arch confessions offered to an audience only too delighted to feast upon them.

Mr Major's was the first speech that attempted to address the nation he leads as well as the party. He made his colleagues look like strutting pygmies. Even the famous deputy prime minister must sink below the salt.

Some of Mr Major's own promises were pretty narrowly aimed. Who but a tiny fragment will care about doubling assisted places at public schools, or abolishing capital gains tax? But the tone was large, the message strikingly unmanufactured.

As emphatically as Tony Blair, therefore, the leader is the leader. At 20 points behind and holding - as the election draws ever nearer - Mr Major also seems at ease with his predicament. Rather more so than Mr Blair.

Blair, the man with everything to prove, meets Major, the governing man, who exhorts an eerie calm that makes the Leader of the Opposition sound frantic.

We learned more about how the Tories will deal with Mr Blair. After weeks of cogitation, they have decided there is no point in pretending he's Dennis Skinner. The conversation scandal is more their bag, although it runs the risk

of making Mr Blair's own case that he is the leader of Middle Britain. Mr Major, however, portrayed him as a Fettes boy, the same smooth-headed fellow, innocent of toil or hardship, that the Left are always deriding.

By contrast, the true man of the people offers his father's failed garden-gnomes business as his degree from the university of life, against the educated thinness of Labour sound-bites. That, and Bosnia. Not to mention Northern Ireland. All in all, two fine conference speeches make clear what sort of contest is beginning to take shape. Mr Blair, the aspirant and idealist, will be pitted against Mr Major, the realist leathery by world experience, with a record he implores us not to throw away. Obscured by dirty tricks and incessant media manipulation, that will be the essential combat. There have been worse ones to contemplate.

Strip club's stock market flotation confirms New York traders' eyes for figures

Ian Katz in New York and Celia Weston in Houston

WALL STREET was up sharply yesterday on news of better than expected figures. At yesterday's close, the most discussed of these was: 38-28-38.

The markets looked bullish from the moment the four letter identifier "RICK" ap-

peared on the electronic dealing screens of the Nasdaq stock exchange at noon. Yesterday, the Houston "gentleman's club" became the first publicly-traded strip joint in the history of the stock exchange - appearing to confirm the passage of the topless bar into mainstream American culture.

The club's founder, Robert Watters, a graduate of the London School of Economics,

said yesterday he intended to use the money raised by the listing to open two or three more Rick's, targeting New Orleans, Atlanta and Phoenix before, in three to four years' time, launching a bridgehead to London - "it certainly needs the excitement".

The Canadian-born lawyer says he became bored with practising law and decided he could have more fun running a very up-market strip show.

Last year the club made a \$200,000 (£125,000) profit after tax, a figure which Mr Watters is predicting will be 45 per cent up this year. But achieving a listing on the stock market has not been easy. "Intestinal fortitude" and an underwriting of \$535,000 have been necessary, he said.

Mr Watters stresses that Rick's has supplied more Playboy and Penthouse centrefolds, 25 of them, than any

other establishment.

"We have the best looking women in the country here and we treat them with respect," he said. "It's like a mousetrap, you bait the trap and they come to you."

For a modest \$7 cover charge and the price of a drink, patrons can ogle upwards of 100 "dancers" cavorting on the club's neon lit runway.

Mr Watters is contemptu-

ous of any suggestion that Rick's is exploitative of "it's the people working in this company, 575 are men and only 25 are men. It's a female dominated business."

The club has been patronised by a host of celebrities from O.J. Simpson to Sting and President George Bush's entire secret service security detail during the 1992 Republican convention.

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Media turns on its own for OJ 'non-interview'

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Nato chief may have to resign if immunity is lifted

Claes questioned in fight for survival

John Palmer in Brussels

THE FIGHT by the Nato secretary-general, Willy Claes, to save his political career entered a decisive phase last night when the former Belgian defence minister was interviewed by 11 senior Belgian politicians in Brussels about his alleged involvement in a bribery scandal.

If the investigating panel of 11 senior Belgian politicians decides to lift his parliamentary immunity Mr Claes may be charged with complicity in fraud, forgery and "abuse of office".

Although Mr Claes protested his innocence again yesterday, he will be left with little option but to resign as Nato's political chief if parliament agrees to lift his immunity.

After six hours of questioning last night the investigating panel was still in session while the Belgian national assembly was on standby ready to consider its conclusions.

The parliamentary commission has been investigating allegations that leading Belgian politicians were involved in bribes paid by an Italian helicopter manufacturer for government defence contracts in 1993.

Earlier yesterday a Belgian

socialist colleague of Mr Claes, the former defence minister Guy Coens, was questioned about his alleged involvement in the payment of a £1.5 million bribe by the French firm Dassault for another Belgian defence contract in 1989.

Mr Claes arrived at the closed session of the Belgian parliament in a chauffeur-driven limousine from Nato headquarters a mile away.

Earlier he dismissed the preliminary report submitted to parliament by the prosecutor general, Jacques Vain, as consisting merely of innuendo. "He is not speaking of facts [but of] indications," Mr Claes declared.

"I say, of course, that I am innocent, that I have never had anything to do with some things which are unacceptable and indefensible," Mr Coens said. "I have never had anything to do with fraud or forgery and the word 'corruption' makes me sick."

The scandal has rocked Belgian politics for years. Four high-ranking socialist politicians have been forced to resign.

The murder in 1991 of a leading socialist politician in Luxembourg on a test case brought by the Guardian on its request to see the minutes of meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Earlier yesterday there

were suggestions that the investigating panel might not decide what recommendation to make about Mr Claes's immunity until after the weekend.

But given the growing embarrassment not only of the Belgian government but of Nato countries generally, it was thought that the national assembly might vote on the panel's conclusions within hours.

The panel faced three choices: to accept the prosecutor-general's request for the immunity of both Mr Claes and Mr Coens to be lifted, to deny it, or to ask for further information.

A decision seemed in prospect last night.

While Nato governments continue to lobby for their undiminished confidence in Mr Claes, contacts are already taking place behind the scenes on a possible successor.

At the top of most lists to replace the Danish foreign minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, and the German defence minister, Volker Rühe.

Nato diplomats in Brussels have expressed growing concern that the alliance could be left leaderless just as it prepares to mount its largest-ever military operation, to support a possible peace settlement in Bosnia.



On the other hand... Wolfgang Schüssel, leader of Austria's conservative People's Party and a partner in its collapsed coalition, addresses party colleagues. Parliament dissolved itself yesterday and President Thomas Klestil asked coalition leaders to form a caretaker administration until elections, probably in December. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GNEDT

Germans wink at Steffi Graf's tax problems

Ian Traynor in Bonn

STEFFI GRAF'S alleged missing millions in unpaid tax is breeding disenchanted German public, but the tennis star's alleged misconduct has struck a chord.

Ms Graf and her business managers, notably her father Peter, in custody for two months pending an investigation into alleged tax evasion to the tune of tens of millions of pounds, are in good company. Confronted by a complicated and high-burden tax system, Germany is becoming a nation of tax-dodgers.

Capital flight, foreign investment, and non-declaration of income or interest on savings have exploded as the government seeks to ease the burden of paying for unity by increasing tax revenue.

Since unification in 1990, it has raised taxes in one form or another 14 times. In the process it has developed a system that defies comprehension for all but the most sophisticated tax consultants.

More than 50 per cent of Germans now see the tax system as unjust and social attitudes towards evasion have shifted strongly in the past decade, according to an opinion poll for the Federation of Taxpayers.

Ten years ago nine out of ten thought honest taxpayers deserved respect and recognition. Now that has fallen to 71 per cent. "The public view of tax evasion is that it is no longer even worth criticising," the federation said. This is hardly surprising,

when the average tax burden in Europe's strongest economy is 46 per cent and the past couple of years have seen increases in indirect taxation.

In a country with a high savings rate of 12.5 per cent, where total household savings are DM4,250 billion (almost £2,000 billion), a favourable way to avoid the taxman is to shift the savings to neighbouring Luxembourg.

Two years ago the government imposed a new 30 per cent withholding tax on interest on savings, hoping to generate another £13.5 billion in revenue. The result was a capital flight to the secret banking world of Luxembourg, not just for wealthy investors but for average Germans, too.

The Munich-based Ifo economics research institute estimates that by 1993 more than £20 billion had moved to Luxembourg, and a lot more since, depriving government coffers of £10 billion in tax revenue in the past two years.

There is nothing illegal in putting your cash in Luxembourg. But non-declaration of the interest is illegal and Bonn has argued in European Union forums for harmonised disclosure regulations, a campaign resisted by Luxembourg and Britain.

Over the past 18 months, German tax inspectors have raided a number of leading German banks, accusing them of advising their clients on tax evasion.

Perhaps Steffi Graf will become a new kind of heroine because of her very alleged fiddling: two out of three Germans no longer regard tax evasion as breaking the law.

Sweden hits at EU secrecy by releasing documents

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European Union's bureaucratic obsession with secrecy is being openly undermined by Sweden, one of the newest member states, whose government is releasing documents kept secret by Brussels.

In the latest manifestation of the Scandinavians' long-standing commitment to openness, Swedish journalists have obtained 18 documents relating to Euro-pol, the new international police force in The Hague, all but four of which the EU has refused to release at its headquarters.

Some of the documents concern restrictions on people's rights to see computerised information about themselves on international police databases. Swedish ministers are pushing for greater openness in the EU, and are promising to raise the issue at December's summit in Madrid and the inter-governmental conference next year.

The attack reflects mounting unease among other member states, especially the Netherlands,

about secrecy in the EU, when it is supposed to have a commitment to greater freedom of information in order to boost public confidence in its workings.

The Swedish exercise came a few days before next Thursday's ruling by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg on a test case brought by the Guardian on its request to see the minutes of meetings of the Council of Ministers.

The newspaper applied to see the documents under the code of public access to information introduced last year, but the request was denied by ministers, led by Britain's then foreign secretary, Douglas Hurd. Sweden was not then a member state.

The documents released in Sweden were being kept secret by the EU. They have been published as a matter of course by the Swedish government, even though Brussels claims their release would breach common security.

They were released by the justice ministry and police. One shows that Euro-pol has decided that it should be allowed three months to respond to applications from individuals

and that it will take no responsibility if its information is incorrect.

It states: "The country that originally left the information has total responsibility."

Another, dated 17 February this year, outlines Euro-pol's sphere of activities, such as the investigation of money-laundering, kidnapping, robbery, fraud and the arms trade — again refused publication by the Council on the grounds of a threat to security.

A third document, dated January 28, discusses whether national police forces should have access to Euro-pol's data on criminals, and decides there should be restrictions based on a distinction between their right to information and their vital need to have it.

Although other EU diplomats have been astonished by Sweden's action, but there is concern at the arbitrariness of EU decision-making. An Irish diplomat said: "We are constantly being told that documents cannot be released and when we ask why we are told, 'oh well, if you want us to issue them we'll do it'."

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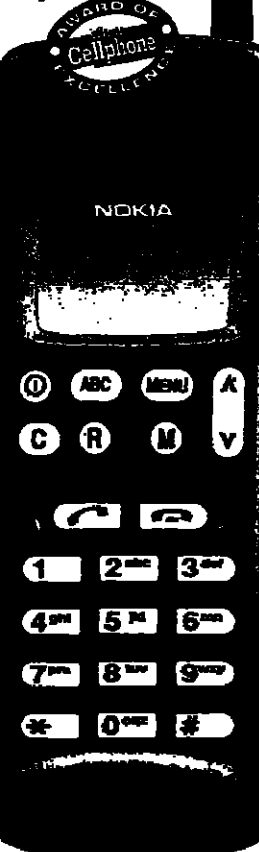
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4 WORLD NEWS

American national security adviser to meet Riffkind in London

Secret talks to smooth Anglo-US funding row

Martin Walker
in Washington

THE White House national security adviser, Tony Lake, will fly to London tomorrow for secret talks with the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, and Ulster Unionist leaders aimed at resolving arguments about funding Bosnian peacekeeping and the Northern Ireland peace process before President Clinton visits Britain next month.

His visit has not been announced by the White House or the British Government. Both are seeking to play down their dispute over the \$1 billion which the US owes the United Nations for Bosnian peacekeeping and how the estimated £2.8 billion cost of Nato's new intervention force in Bosnia should be shared.

An increasingly edgy White House slapped down the Pentagon yesterday for talking too openly about the details of US troop deployments in Bosnia.

The Republicans are planning to make the huge cost of the force and possible US casualties the centrepiece of

their presidential election campaign.

Military officials should not be talking about that prior to their commander in chief making his decisions, and we have let the Pentagon know about that," the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said yesterday.

His comment came after senior Pentagon officials confirmed that the US will send 20,000 troops to the "hot zone" holding the ceasefire line from Sarajevo to Tuzla, once the peace agreement is signed.

The Pentagon has ruled out the Russian proposal for an international fund to pay for the Nato-led force without establishing how the estimated annual \$6 billion costs will be shared.

Most of the 10 Republican candidates campaigning in the New Hampshire primary have firmly opposed sending any US troops into what one, Pat Buchanan, has called "the European mess".

The others, including the frontrunner, Bob Dole, say they will wait for Mr Clinton to make his case to the nation.

They believe he will drape a political noose around his

neck by sending American troops into harm's way in a controversial mission during an election year.

Mr Clinton is grimly determined to fulfil his commitment to send up to 20,000 troops to Bosnia to uphold the Bosnian peace agreement. White House sources say the president is even prepared to send the troops without congressional authorisation, but this would be a huge political risk.

"This could bust Nato wide apart," Mr Buchanan said yesterday. "This Republican Congress is not going to authorise the president to send American troops to Bosnia. If he does, Congress will not authorise the funds, and the American people know that this is not a vital national interest."

The Republicans already have their martyr: a young army private who faces being discharged for refusing to wear United Nations uniform as his unit prepares to deploy in a peacekeeping force in Macedonia.

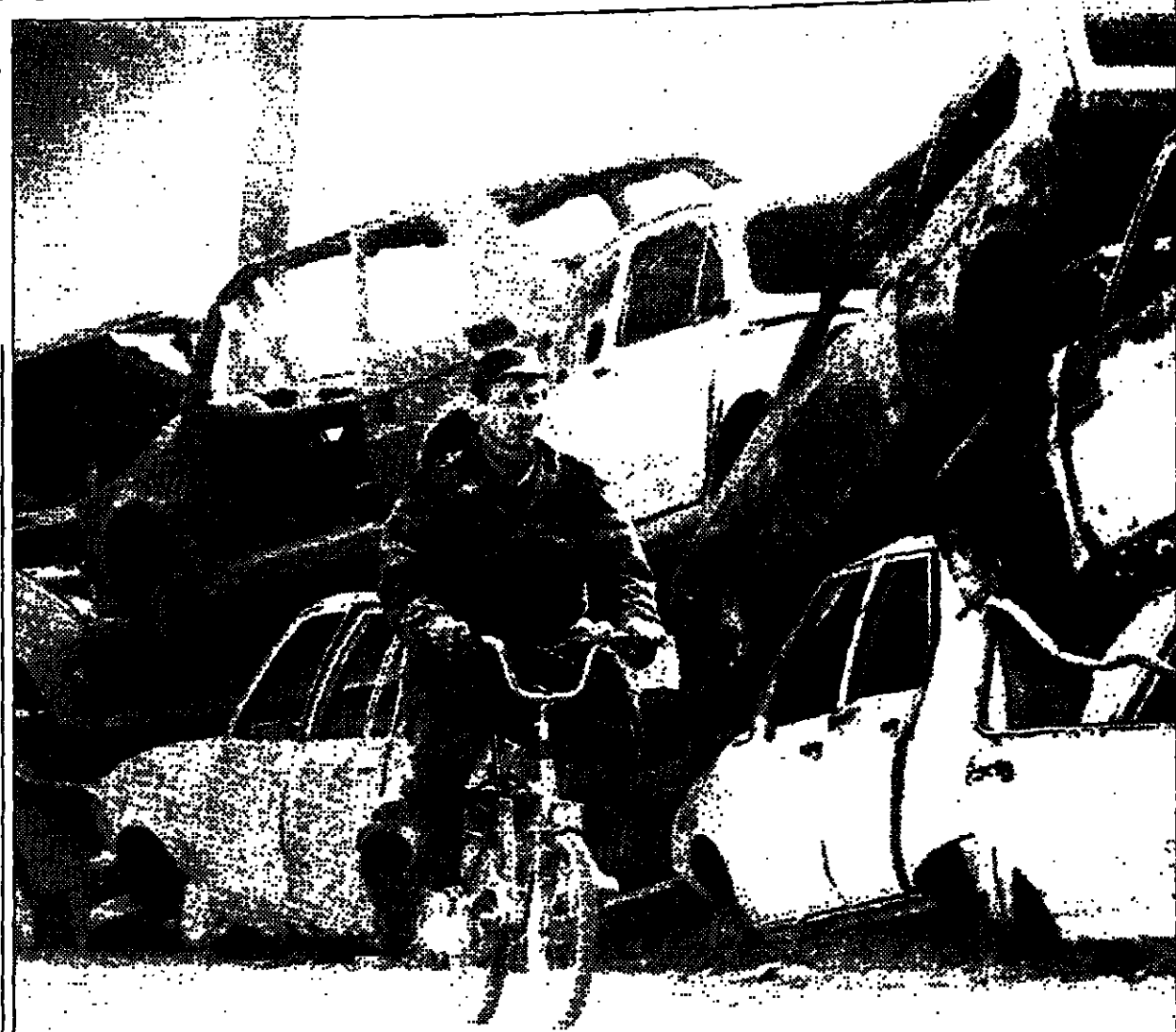
After complaining that by wearing the UN's blue helmet and shoulder badges he is violating his oath to serve the US, Michael New has been

removed from his unit, the 15th infantry regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division, which will leave for Macedonia next week.

"This president is surrendering out interests to the United Nations," Mr Dole said this week as a leading New Hampshire newspaper published a front-page editorial in support of Pte New.

Mr Lake will meet the new Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble. He is expected to tell Mr Trimble that the White House is not taking sides between Northern Ireland's Unionists and Republicans. The US broadly supports the London-Dublin strategy for all-party talks to proceed simultaneously with an international commission to handle decommissioning of arms.

But with Sinn Féin refusing to start by decommissioning weapons, and Unionists objecting to all-party talks until they do, the US is desperate to secure a breakthrough to give Mr Clinton something to boast about in London next month. Mr Lake is likely to promote the idea of holding an elected forum or constitutional convention instead of the all-party talks.



Ceasefire takes hold... A Bosnian soldier passes by an anti-sniping barricade made of destroyed cars in the Sarajevo district of Halilovic yesterday as UN peacekeepers reported a sharp fall in military activity. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER ANDREWS

Halt offensive or no peace deal, Serbs warn foes

Julian Borger in Pale

SERB rebels threatened yesterday to pull out of the ceasefire agreement, cancel all further peace talks and seek outside military support if the Bosnian army and its Croat allies continue their advance towards the Serb strongholds in the west of the country.

Two days after the truce was agreed, fierce fighting was continuing in western Bosnia. Bosnian Serb sources in the rebel headquarters at Pale said that Muslim and Croat forces were advancing towards Banja Luka from the south and were within nine miles of the city. Another joint offensive was six miles away from Prijedor, also a Serb bastion, they said.

The Bosnian Serbs' deputy leader, Nikola Koljevic, said they would withdraw from the peace process if the advance did not stop and would also seek arms from the rest of the Slav Orthodox world to enable them to continue the war.

Mr Koljevic, a Shakespearean scholar turned nationalist politician, admitted that the threats were being made without the approval of the rebels' sponsor, the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, who is leading negotiations on their behalf.

"But we don't think he would reject this as it would be another disaster for the Serbs," Mr Koljevic said.

United Nations officials in Sarajevo said it was hard to estimate the weight of the ultimatum without President Milosevic's explicit backing. But if the rebels unilaterally opted out of the talks, it would cast doubt on the Serbian leader's ability to deliver a peace settlement at the peace talks in the United States scheduled for the end of the month.

Irregular Serbian troops, under the warlord Arkan, are already fighting alongside the rebels in western Bosnia. It is widely believed that Arkan (Zeljko Raznatovic) would not have been allowed to cross into Bosnia without President Milosevic's approval. Further Muslim-Croat gains could trigger greater and more open intervention by Belgrade.

At a meeting yesterday with the UN commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, Mr Koljevic demanded UN action to halt the Muslim-Croat offensive.

"We asked for an immediate ceasefire which should be controlled by the UN in the Banja Luka region tomorrow," he said.

"If this doesn't happen tomorrow, in another 24 hours we'll step out of the peace process... and approach Orthodox and Slavonic countries for military support," he said — a reference to expected support from Russian nationalists.

"It's clear that the Muslims want the whole of Bosnia, and they're not going to get it."

Mr Koljevic, speaking at Lukavica — the main Serb military base on the outskirts of Sarajevo — said that after halting the offensive the government and Croatian forces would require the government to withdraw to the lines they held when the ceasefire came into effect on Thursday morning. Otherwise the Serbs would take no part in peace-implementation talks.

Jovan Zambetica, the chief Bosnian Serb spokesman, said the Serbs would help UN observers fly to Banja Luka to see the military situation for themselves.

Banja Luka, already flooded with 170,000 refugees from other over-run Serb towns, was showing signs of panic yesterday as word spread of an imminent attack by advancing Bosnian and Croat forces.

It introduced an 11pm-5am curfew and ordered schools, bars and restaurants to shut. Aid workers described the city as "extremely tense".

Bosnian Serb military forces said the Muslim-Croat offensive on Banja Luka had reached the village of Krupa na Vrbasu, nine miles to the south.

Meanwhile, four artillery shells struck Prijedor yesterday while the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, was in town trying to rally resistance.

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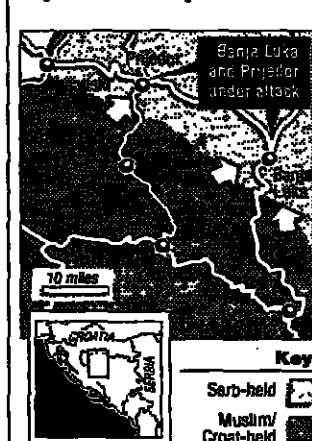
The Bosnian army fifth corps, based in Bihać, claims to be in a position to threaten Banja Luka. The commander, General Atif Dudakov, has openly scorned the peace process and said his men were ready to take back the homes from which they were expelled in the Serb ethnic cleansing campaigns of 1992.

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Outlook page 14

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Iraqis vote with fear in their hearts

Citizens will play only a walk-on role in tomorrow's referendum on the president, writes JONATHAN RUGMAN from Tikrit, the stronghold of the ruling clan

The president's efficient propaganda machine has gone into overdrive this week. While the Iraqi dinar plummeted against the dollar, the hero worship of Saddam has reached a delirious peak. One tabloid newspaper published 45 photographs of the president. "Saddam Hussein is the banner flying over the heads of Iraqis," ran the front page of another daily. "He is the heart and the heartbeat of Iraq."

For all the rhetoric, a basic taboo is being broken. Before now, it would have been heresy to question Saddam's rule. Even his name was rarely used in public conversation in Baghdad for fear of attracting suspicious ears. If all goes according to plan, tomorrow's poll will be followed by parliamentary elections, a new law on political parties and a new constitution. The deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, has suggested that for the first time since 1968, Iraq is ready to move from "revolutionary legitimacy" to "constitutional legitimacy".

This may sound convincing to countries anxious to resume trade with Iraq. It may sound like "democracy" to countries that have a poor definition of that concept. Diplomats and ordinary Iraqis agree that absolute power will remain where it is. The overwhelming vote will probably serve as a pretext for yet another reshuffle of Saddam's generals and ministers.

Those who could one day conspire to finish off the Tikriti dynasty for good. The plebiscite is clearly not the wind of democratic change that London and Washington say they want. But it should be understood in the context of a notoriously repressive region. The Arabic

Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites will be unleashed.

What has been noticeable this week has been the relative freedom with which journalists can travel about the country. Although the security apparatus remains strong, perhaps the civilian administration is so demoralised and underpaid that it actively wants journalists to pick up the odd whiff of dissent.

Or perhaps Iraqi officials want to show that, even if Saddam is not serious about changing his power structure, they themselves are. There has been a new willingness to co-operate fully with UN weapons inspectors. Although the UN's chief monitor, Rolf Ekeus, was critical of Iraq this week, he now possesses a 600,000-page document the Iraqis had previously held back. The authorities pinned the blame on Saddam's defector son-in-law General Hussein Kamel al-Majid, who they said had hidden the papers in a farm outside Baghdad.

There are two main ways of Iraq's ending its parish status — democratisation (including safeguards for Kurds and Shi'ites) and weapons verification. It is generally agreed that Iraq has already destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction, either under UN supervision or in anticipation of allied bombing raids, as occurred on Iraqi storage sites during the 1990-91 Gulf war.

But even if Iraq is no longer a military threat, progress on democracy will prove more elusive. Even if tomorrow's brief exercise develops into something more, it seems that neither the United States nor Britain has any intention of doing business with Iraq as long as UN resolutions can be flexibly interpreted, and as long as Saddam remains in power.

Nor is Washington ready to seek his removal actively. With Gen Majid's defection to Jordan in August, a nose appeared to be tightening around Saddam's neck. The summer's US diplomatic and military activity in the Gulf ultimately turned out to be little more than sabre-rattling propaganda, while King Hussein of Jordan did not follow up his disparaging comments about the Iraqi regime by halting border trade.

Various Iraqi opposition groups exist in exile, including the umbrella Iraqi National Congress (INC) based in London and Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. The INC is damned by Iraqis for both failing to share the suffering of the people, as any resistance movement should, and being unable to establish a foothold in central and southern Iraq in the absence of more significant British and US help.

Diplomats in Baghdad are unanimous that the INC has no constituency. "They are seen here as corrupt stooges of the West," one ambassador said.

"All those who say they want Saddam to go are a bunch of hypocrites," another diplomat said. "Nobody will risk taking him out when they don't know the outcome."

So it is that the people of Iraq seem destined to soldier on, more afraid of the future than the present, a flock with only one wretched shepherd, the same man they have followed for the past 27 years.



Our man... Supporters of Saddam Hussein attend a pre-plebiscite rally in Baghdad yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: JASSIM MOHAMMED

IF YOU drive two hours north from the capital Baghdad, past palm trees, dubious-looking military installations and windswept flatlands, you come to the sprawling town of Tikrit. It was once a typical Arab village. But the wealth and status that Tikrit has acquired since its most famous son orchestrated Iraq's 1968 Ba'athist military coup has turned the town into a kind of theme park, dedicated to President Saddam Hussein.

"Welcome to our capital," an Iraqi jokes as we pass shops, mosques and newly constructed municipal buildings plastered with pictures of the president. The road to Saddam's birthplace at al-Owja is lined with the mansions of Tikrit's nouveaux riches.

Among the many presidential portraits that dominate the street corners is a fetching one of Saddam wearing an army beret, with two cherubs stroking his cheeks. Beyond lies the Iraqi leader's home, invisible within a Forbidden City, surrounded by a 13ft wall and guarded by soldiers who tell us to leave.

If Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti could anywhere win 100 per cent of the vote in tomorrow's referendum on his presidency, it would be in his Sunni Arab stronghold of Tikrit. Tomorrow will be the very first time Iraq's estimated 8 million voters — excluding those in the autonomous and warring Kurdish north — have been asked whether they want Saddam as their president.

Iraq's leader was once famous for dropping in unannounced on his citizens' homes, where he would poke his nose into their refrigerators. His image remains ubiquitous, but the man himself is rarely seen. According to the London-based Iraqi opposition, a plot to bomb the president's car misfired in June.

Iraqis are naturally intrigued by the defection in August of two of Saddam's daughters and sons-in-law. It was the latest twist in a family feud fit for a Roman emperor. Television cameras in the streets of Baghdad this week have found plenty of citizens willing to speak of their love for the president, but in private, Iraqis are often angry at their terrible misfortune and disgusted by their leader's heinous misdeeds.

When they enter more than 1,600 polling stations tomorrow, these people will put aside the fact that their leader has taken his country into two catastrophic Gulf wars, gassed Kurds, persecuted Shi'ite Arabs in the southern marshes, provoked devastating United Nations sanctions and built up enough chemical weapons to kill the world's population four times over.

"I will vote yes with my head on Sunday," one young man in Baghdad said. "But only because Saddam Hussein has taught us how to fear. If you ask what my heart thinks, then the answer is, no."

Iraqis are so frightened of their police state that they are determined to make tomorrow's result a resounding "yes" for President Saddam as he seeks to reassert mastery over his own house.

Millions of Iraqi citizens will play walk-on roles in the president's latest drama, "a farce intended to bolster his spurious democratic credentials", according to a British diplomat. Saddam's manoeuvres are being given some legitimacy by the media circus from around the world, comprising hundreds of journalists who have accepted a rare invitation to visit Baghdad. They unwittingly serve another of the master's purposes, highlighting as they do the humanitarian cost of the UN sanctions policy.

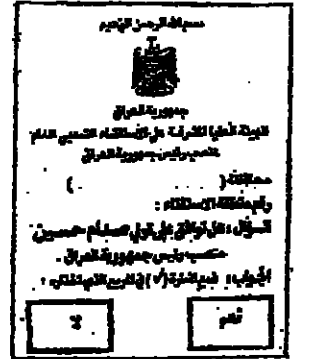
"I got a baby coughing its last into my microphone," said one satisfied British reporter after returning from the children's ward of an Iraqi hospital. Babies will indeed perish to order here — more than 5,000 undernourished under-fives die every month, according to the health minister.

Dilapidated Iraq is desperately in need of something which at least smacks of change. "Rust is eating away at the place," said one of a small corps of ambassadors still accredited to Baghdad, pointing to the empty shops and unwept streets. "But there is no significant change at the top, no connection between sanctions and toppling Saddam."

In a country where a doctor's monthly salary will pay for 30 eggs, most Iraqis are preoccupied with how to fill their children's stomachs. They apparently see no solution to their underlying problem — Saddam himself.

"The next man must be even stronger," a taxi driver warned. Few doubt that if the president's grip is ever loosened, civil war between

The ballot paper (left) asks voters whether they accept Saddam Hussein as their president, with boxes marked 'yes' or 'no'



word has better translates as "endorsement" than "referendum", a process whereby the people make a medieval pledge of allegiance to their leader, presumably thereby renewing the vitality of their social structures.

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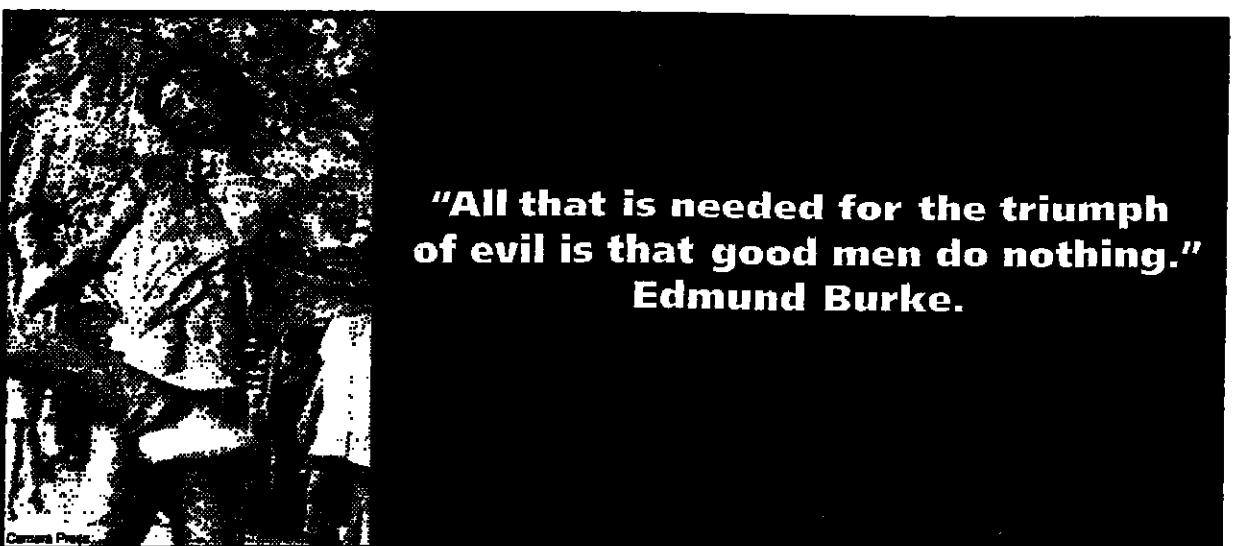
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"All that is needed for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."
Edmund Burke.

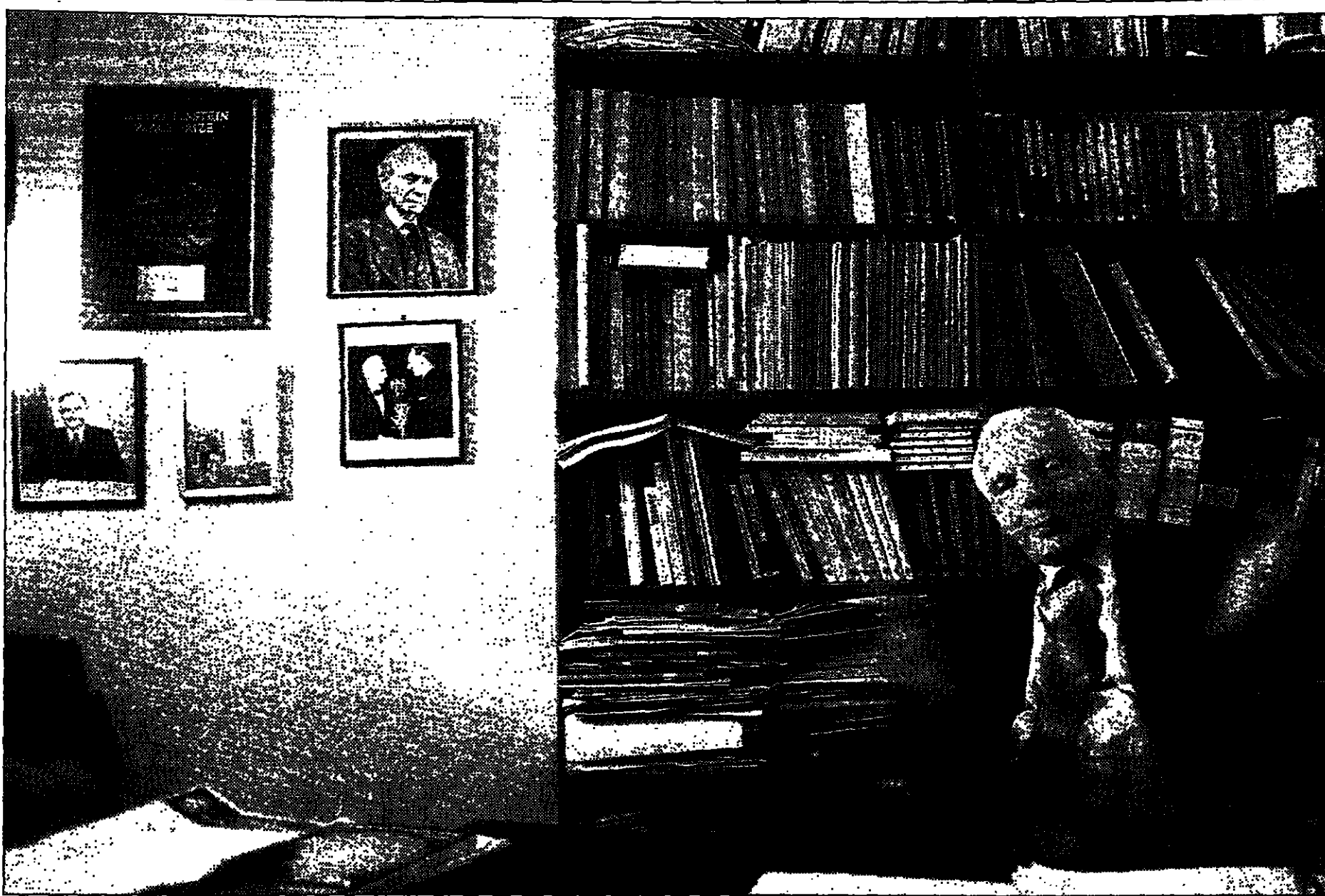
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It would be nice if everyone who agreed with Edmund Burke's noble sentiment actually did something about it. Join Amnesty and you can help prisoners of conscience - people who are imprisoned for their colour, sex, race, ethnic group, language, politics or religion - who have neither used or advocated violence.

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WEEK 15 - 22 OCTOBER





Nobel Peace Prize winner Joseph Rotblat at the offices of the anti-nuclear Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN SMITH

'Pugwash Briton' wins Nobel prize

Honour for scientist signifies anger at resumption of French nuclear tests

Edward Pilkington, Jonathan Steele and Greg Mulvey in Stockholm

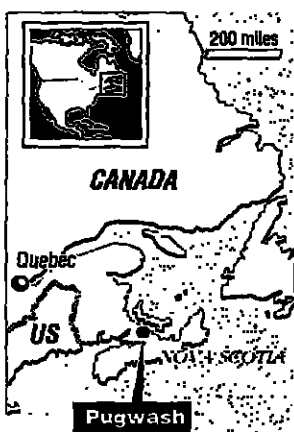
A LITTLE-KNOWN British scientist who helped to develop the first atomic bomb and has spent 40 years campaigning against nuclear weapons was propelled into instant global stardom yesterday when he was awarded the \$1 million (£833,000) Nobel Peace Prize.

Polish-born Joseph Rotblat, aged 86, who lives in London, said he was overwhelmed to receive the award. "I read in the papers that our prime minister was going to get it. He's a big name, I thought, while no one has ever heard of me."

The prize makes Professor Rotblat the equal of such illustrious figures as Theodore Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama. But he was deprecating yesterday, both about himself and about the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, the group of anti-nuclear scientists of which he is president and with which he will share the prize.

"Many more people in this country know about Captain Pugwash than about us," he said at the campaign's offices in central London. Gesturing at the worn carpet and peeling wallpaper, he added: "It's not quite what you would expect of a world organisation. We've been quite lonely all these years."

Prof Rotblat is the only survivor of a group of 11 scientists who came together 40 years ago to raise awareness of the nuclear threat. The two most prominent members, Bertrand Russell and Albert



PERENNIAL questions about the Byzantine way in which the Nobel committee decides on its peace prize were overshadowed this year by another mystery: how Pugwash acquired its name.

It originates, intriguingly, from a small fishing village on the coast of Nova Scotia, which bears the same name. It was there that a group of thinkers including Bertrand Russell and Joseph Rotblat first met at the start of their campaign against nuclear armaments.

It was 1957 and the scientists involved were determined to alert the world to the threat of nuclear war.

The only problem was they lacked cash. In stepped Cyrus Eaton, a Canadian grocer's son, who later became an American citizen and one of the richest men in the US.

A classic capitalist magnate, he knew several US presidents. He was convinced by Russell to put some of his money at the service of nuclear disarmament and superpower detente.

Russell proposed that Eaton finance a series of

conferences of scientists from all the countries who had worked on nuclear weapons. Eaton agreed, but on two conditions — that they hold their first meeting on his estate in Nova Scotia and adopt its native American name, Pugwash. Canada was seen as an ideal location since it was a non-nuclear power.

As time went on, and the Pugwash conference grew in size and influence, its name became a mild embarrassment. But Prof Rotblat and his colleagues never could decide on a better title.

to disguise the fact that the decision also contained a note of anger at the resumption of French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

"The specific message to the French is a protest against the nuclear tests, as it is a protest against nuclear tests and armaments in general," said the committee's chairman, Francis Sejersted.

Meanwhile, congratulations flooded in for the Nobel laureate from around the world. The most flattering comment, however, remains that made by Bertrand Russell, who predicted before he died that Prof Rotblat would win the peace prize. Referring to nuclear weapons, he said: "If ever these evils are eradicated, his name should stand very high indeed among the heroes."

town, Warsaw. He moved to Liverpool in 1939 and five years later was recruited into the Manhattan Project, developing the first nuclear weapon, in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

"At that time I was very afraid that if Germany developed the bomb Hitler would have no hesitation using it. But when it became clear that the Germans would not have a weapon ready by the end of the war I became disillusioned."

In December 1944 Prof Rotblat became the only scientist to quit the Manhattan Project. He returned to Britain, where he took British nationality two years later, and was barred from re-entering the United States until 1964.

Since its inception Pugwash has remained a relatively small body of dedicated scientists. But Prof Rotblat said its influence has been profound, helping to create the climate in which Mikhail Gorbachev made the first groundbreaking moves towards disarmament.

The recognition by the secretive five-member Nobel committee in Oslo of Prof Rotblat and Pugwash signifies the return of the nuclear debate to the top of the international agenda. It was the first peace prize to be won by the disarmament cause since 1985.

Officially, the committee said the award had been in-

Previous peace laureates

1994 — Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres for their role in replacing "war and hate" with "peace and co-operation" in the Middle East.

1993 — Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk "for their work in the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa".

1992 — Rigoberta Menchu, Guatemalan Indian human rights activist, awarded in recognition of her struggle for human rights and social justice for indigenous peoples.

1991 — Aung San Suu Kyi for her "non-violent

struggle for democracy and human rights" in Burma.

1990 — Mikhail Gorbachev for his role in ending the cold war.

1989 — The Dalai Lama for his "peaceful and unrelenting struggle to liberate his people from Chinese rule".

1988 — United Nations peacekeeping forces in recognition of the UN's efforts as a peace-broker in the Gulf war and the Afghanistan conflict.

1987 — President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica for "persuading all five Central American presidents to support his plan for ending the region's civil wars and domestic repression".

Officially, the committee said the award had been in-

Drought-hit water firm wins award for gizmo that plugs leaks

Martin Wainwright

YORKSHIRE Water's dazzling brand of image-making, which has mesmerised drought-stricken customers in the region since early summer, continued yesterday with the announcement that the firm has won an industrial award for water distribution.

The company, famous for losing between a quarter and a third of its treated supplies through leaking pipes, has been given the prize and two Highly Commended certificates in the Manufacturing Industry Achievement Awards — advised, according

to sceptics, by a panel of squealing moles and worms.

The presentation, which coincides with the latest gloomy figures on Yorkshire's dwindling water stocks, centres on the firm's new patented device, the Whiskey. Although sounding like a dream gizmo capable of ending the six-month failure of rain to fall on the Pennine watershed, this is a small though cunning valve for rapid use in sealing off bursts in mains.

"It's nice to have a piece of good news," said a Yorkshire Water spokesman, just back from a regular walk in Leeds without his jacket ("I never wear it, because in the past, it's always rained when I go

out without putting it on.")

The Whiskey is certain to see particularly frequent use in Yorkshire Water's own district, where daily leaks top 80 million gallons and burst repairs to ancient pipes usually create new bursts at the next weak point along.

The prizes were presented at a gala dinner in Birmingham, well away from the drought crisis points in Hallam, where reservoir stocks have dipped to 13.9 per cent, and Bradford, where supplies are at 18.6 per cent.

Yorkshire Water's own recent awards ceremony for miserly industrial customers was marred by reports of after-dinner jokes about the

drought, and two weeks ago the firm's nomination for a customer Charter Mark was compared to Count Dracula wanting a blood transfusion golden badge.

The firm's other PR coups have included managing director Trevor Newton's three-month spell without a bath (except, it later emerged, at his mother's home). And the memorable suggestion that factories and offices move to somewhere wetter.

Leeds weather centre marked Friday the 13th by estimating that the heaviest winter rainfall for over 100 years will be required to bring reservoirs up to normal levels.

Britain calls for nuclear test delay

Officials stress political risks as Auckland summit looms

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

B RITAIN has told France it cannot maintain its support for nuclear tests if another blast is triggered before next month's Commonwealth summit in New Zealand, the Guardian has learned.

Urging France to delay the next test is part of Britain's effort to persuade Commonwealth countries not to "put it in the dock" at the Auckland conference.

Another part of the strategy is to announce backing for a South Pacific nuclear-free zone.

The Foreign Office last night denied making a direct request to Paris to delay its next test but a spokesman said: "We are sure that the French are well aware of the date of the Commonwealth summit." No decision had yet been taken on the nuclear-free zone.

According to well-placed diplomatic sources, Britain has stressed to France the political dangers of testing again at the time of the conference, where John Major will face hostility from New Zealand and Australia, as well as smaller Commonwealth countries.

The next test could be scheduled for early November if France maintains its usual four-week pattern. The Auckland summit runs from November 10 to 13.

Britain's message to the French, backed up a similarly discreet one from the Commonwealth secretary-general, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, follows an appeal to President Jacques Chirac by Bill Clinton shortly before the United States president, Bill Clinton, visited Hawaii in early September. The first test took place shortly after he left.

Jim Bolger, New Zealand's prime minister, and his Australian counterpart, Paul Keating, have strongly criticised Britain's position.

Britain has remained silent because its nuclear policies are very close to those of the French and because the two

countries collaborate quietly on nuclear matters.

The Foreign Office says that while Britain "understands the strong feelings in the region", the tests "are a matter for the French". It emphasises that the key issue is attaining a comprehensive test-ban treaty by next year.

British plans to join the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone have been accelerated by Commonwealth anger, and by indications that the US is about to follow Russia and China in signing up.

The protocols of the Treaty of Rarotonga prohibit stationing, testing and stockpiling nuclear weapons, but do not affect transit rights.

"If the UK could announce its intention to join the nuclear-free zone it would certainly help the atmosphere and the handling of the nuclear decision at Auckland," an Australian official said. "People would really welcome it and give Britain due credit."

Commonwealth diplomats believe France will respect the British position. "It makes perfect sense," said one diplomat. "You can imagine what it will be like if the French explode a bomb three days before the Auckland summit. But the British are being very nervous about all this. They are very nervous and with good reason."

The testing issue is likely to come up when the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, meets his French counterpart, Hervé de Charette, in Paris on Monday.

British officials are irritated that the nuclear issue is coming to dominate what should have been the first Commonwealth summit in years which would not be overshadowed by divisions about South Africa, and which they had hoped could deal with the issue of democracy — including the hot topic of Nigeria.

"Mr Bolger and Mr Keating know that the Prime Minister doesn't see much attraction in slogging right to the other end of the globe to hear a lot of whinging about French nuclear tests," said one. "Britain is not being put in the dock."

Paris is sending mixed signals. Mr De Charette hinted the tests might end before the May 31 deadline set by President Chirac. Mr De Charette said: "The sooner the better, to judge by the hullabaloo that they have produced."

**I'M A LOYAL
MONARCHIST
SAYS
AUSTRALIAN PM**

Until then, there's Glenfiddich to enjoy.



She is notoriously capricious. She is a wealthy left-winger who chose to send her sons to Bedales. She holds herself aloof from the pretensions of the fashion world but also cultivates a mysterious look for photographs, insisting on dark glasses. She campaigns against synthetics, but uses them in her collections. Katherine Hamnett interviewed

Outlook page 17

PM says fifth term 'could wipe out socialism' • Hopes pinned on crime package and plan to scrap inheritance tax

Major issues millennium challenge

Party is urged to keep out the 'wreckers'

Rebecca Smithers
Political Correspondent

JOHN MAJOR yesterday affirmed his commitment to One Nation, moderate Conservatism, as he urged party members to mount the fight of their lives to ensure victory at the election.

Warning that Labour would "wreck" the achievements of 16 years in office, he unveiled new measures to woo voters, including the eventual scrapping of inheritance tax and capital gains tax, and a crime-busting package to tackle organised crime and put more policemen on the streets.

A fifth term could wipe out socialism for good and ensure that the economic, social, and technological challenges facing the country in the Millennium were met.

Mr Major told delegates that, having won four successive elections, the Conservative Party was now heading "for five... and six... and seven... and then we'll think again".

He stressed that the election was "a watershed" because whoever won would "inherit the strongest economy this country has seen for decades".

The Conservatives had built up that economy single-handedly. "It wasn't easy. It was painful and difficult, and we had no help from our opponents."

To thunderous applause, Mr Major added: "I don't know about you, but I'm not in the mood to hand it over to any other party to wreck."

Urging members "to mount the fight of our lives", he said that when the time came, the party was going "to deliver the win of our lives".

Mr Major began by underlining his leadership victory, saying he had no choice but to resign in June "because speculation was drowning out everything we were trying to do. How could you argue our case on the doorstep against

that sort of background?" He ridiculed New Labour by accusing Tony Blair of the "double-think" of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* — "the trick of holding two contradictory beliefs at the same time, and believing both of them."

There were two choices facing voters — the Labour way or the Conservative way. The Conservatives would respond to "the millennium challenge" that would bring longer, fuller lives, changes in world power, more competition, and fast and furious technological change.

But, reinforcing his enterprise theme, he said: "The state can't do it all. And, what is more important, the state shouldn't do it all."

"Beat Labour one more time, and you have beaten socialism out of this country for good."

Pledging to make Britain the Enterprise Centre of Europe, he said that business was the root of success, generating taxes which paid for teachers, nurses, and public services. But to compete with America, Japan, and the Pacific basin, it was essential to get public expenditure below 40 per cent of gross domestic product, and to cut taxes now the recession was over.

To huge applause, he said that this meant not only income tax, but also inheritance and capital gains tax, which should eventually be scrapped completely.

Reciprocating John Prescott's jokes last week about No 10's cat, Humphrey, Mr Major said the cat had bolted when he had asked it about Labour's claims that it knows how to run a market economy. "I've never seen him move so fast. It took all the resources of the Royal Army Medical College to get him over the shock and back to Downing Street."

Declaring that the Conservatives were the party of small business, Mr Major paid tribute to his late father, twice dabbling his eyes. "He made garden ornaments 40



Rallying to the flag... An enthusiastic delegate endorses John Major as he promises a fifth, sixth, and even seventh term

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MEESE

years ago, and some people find that rather humorous," he told delegates. "I don't. I see the proud, stubborn, independent old man I loved who ran that firm and taught me to love my country, fight for my own, and spit in the eye of malign fate."

To applause, he added: "I know the knockers and sneerers who may never have taken a risk in their comfortable lives aren't fit to wipe the boots of the risk-takers of Britain." People running small businesses were heroes, "and we're going to back them."

On Europe, Mr Major stated very clearly that he would not burden businesses by signing up for the Social Charter. "We entered Europe for prosperity, for co-operation, for a louder voice on that

great continent. But we did not enter it for a new tier of government, we did not enter it for socialism through the back door, and we did not enter it for a federal Europe."

While he stressed that he was for Europe, not against it, he said that if other countries went federalist, a Conservative Britain would not. "Our partners must understand that it's politically and constitutionally unacceptable."

Although the National Health Service was set up under Labour, Mr Major said it was the Conservatives who had "fought to make it the best in the world in the next century", and that they were now modernising it "so that it remains the best in the world". Success in health-care was placing a burden on

the welfare system, but it was not right to load the bills onto future generations. New approaches to long-term care were now being examined, involving new forms of savings and insurance, and more flexible use of pensions.

Announcing plans to double the assisted places scheme, and the target of enabling all schools to become grant-maintained, Mr Major said he wanted to widen choice within education. Parents should be allowed to have specialist schools, and religious schools if they wanted them.

"This isn't a dogma. It isn't elitist. It's based on the belief that children are first and foremost the responsibility of parents, and that parents know what is best for their

children." As part of the drive for excellence, bad schools should be closed. This meant having a row. "But it's the right row to have, and Gillian Shephard is prepared to have it. Don't mess with Gill."

Mr Major then won applause when he declared that the annuity to holders of the Victoria Cross and the George Cross would go up from £100 to £2,300 a year.

Stripping at Mr Blair's speech last week, he said: "Unlike others, I didn't hear people on VJ Day shouting out party political propaganda. For me, it was a day in which a free people paid tribute to the people who kept them free."

On Northern Ireland, Mr Major paid tribute to Sir Patrick Mayhew, but added that

there was a long way to go to make permanent the changes brought about by the ceasefire.

However long it took, "building this peace in this part of our United Kingdom will continue to stand at the head of our priorities."

With the British armed forces now serving in more than 40 countries, he strongly defended his decision to send troops to Bosnia — "we can and should be proud of what they have achieved."

Closer to home, Mr Major said he was sensitive to concern about Scotland, but he would not trade "easy votes today for constitutional chaos tomorrow."

Champion of small firms goes back down memory lane to recall father's gnome business struggles

Michael White on a poignant moment during John Major's conference speech

JOHN Major offered the Conservative conference at Blackpool a rare glimpse into the personal traumas of his teenage years yesterday when he invoked memories of the bankruptcy of his father's garden gnome business and the family's move from suburbia to Brighton.

Justifying Tory claims to be the party of small business he said: "When I was a small boy, my bread and butter was paid for by my father's small business. He made garden orna-

ments 40 years ago — and some people find that rather humorous. I don't."

The prime minister, who is keenly sensitive to being patronised, has seen lavish media attention paid to the garden gnome business in Worcester Park, south London — not least via the memoirs of his older brother, Terry Major-Ball who worked for Mr Major senior.

By contrast the prime minister, who left Rutlish Grammar at 16 with O-level

results which remain secret to this day, has shielded much of that period, except when he revisited in old haunts for a 1992 election broadcast.

As the hall went quiet yesterday he evoked his father.

"I see the proud, stubborn, independent old man I loved who ran that firm and taught me to love my country, fight for my own and spit in the eye of malign fate."

"I know the knockers and sneerers who may never have taken a risk in their comfortable lives aren't fit to wipe the boots of the risk takers," said Mr Major.

When talking about crime he later stressed that poor people in inner cities usually suffer its effects — in neighbourhoods which he said the knockers and sneerers would hesitate to visit in broad daylight.

That was clearly a reference to the Brighton of his youth, though it was gentler then than now.



John Major dabbling his eye while talking about his father at Blackpool

Funny-peculiar man from Nigeria spits back at knockers and sneerers



Simon Hoggart

IN HIS newly impregnable position, John Major could afford a clunker, and he duly gave us one.

I realise this is a minority view. Some of my colleagues thought it was the best speech he had ever made to the Tory conference. But it left the delegates curiously unmoved. They applauded loud and long at the end, but there was a real sense that this was a duty rather than a pleasure.

It looked fine on TV, but it didn't travel so well in the hall. He seemed to lose their attention about halfway through. People started chatting to each other from the corner of their mouths.

Someone must have told him to change the pitch now and again, with the result that on "We Conservatives are for the individual, not the state; for choice, not direction..." he sounded as if someone had grabbed him, very hard, between the legs. Sometimes he would select a word at random, and, in the middle of a quiet passage, bark it out.

Even many of the jokes fell flat, at least by the standards of a conference which is capable of laughing itself senseless at the feeblest one-liners. "Labour say they know how to run a market economy. I asked Humphrey the cat about that. I've never seen him move so fast!"

It was an edition of *Pets Win Prizes*, though without Dale Winton's macho style. "The Liberals are the only party in British political history that has had its entire battle plans wiped clean off the media — by a goldfish. My goldfish!"

In another faintly surreal passage he pointed out that George Orwell was another socialist whose real name was Blair. "He changed his name. I can't say the same thing about the Leader of the Oppo-

sition. He's changed everything else", a curious crack from someone who halved his own family name. This may be connected with his theory that John Major is actually Nigerian, and learned English at the British Council library in Kano. Hence the strange circumlocutions: "Choice is liberty. Blazon it on your mind!" was one.

"If we'd followed Labour's advice, this country would have been on Carey Street years ago," he said. When did you last hear anyone say that? But in that dog-eared work, *Speak English the Way the English Do* (1939) we read: "If someone is in danger of going bankrupt, British people say to one another 'he is going to Carey Street'..."

Even the most personal passage, about his father, was curiously strained. "He taught me to love my country, fight for my own and spit in the eye of malign fate. I know the knockers and sneerers... aren't fit to wipe the boots of the risk takers of Britain."

There was one elaborately set-up joke which landed leadenly on top of the delegates. He mentioned Fettes school. "Quite a lot of famous poli-

ticians went to Fettes — including... At this point there was a long pause: "... Iain Macleod!"

Perhaps the conference didn't remember that a more recent old Fettesian (Fettesian? Fetterperson?) was Tony Blair. In any event the gag was met with a bewildered silence.

He also spent time congratulating himself — with, to be fair, some justification, given his coup in June. He told us that, if he had lost, he would have loyally turned up at the conference. "But I won."

Even when admiring Patrick Mayhew and Michael Ancrum for their work in Northern Ireland, he inserted a plug for himself. "They are keen to give me the credit," he announced, with fake modesty.

At the end, he clearly thought he'd done extremely well, and no doubt everyone he met yesterday told him the same. As he might say himself, he had spat on the boots of malign fate. It certainly was no disaster; like many of Mr Major's speeches it was just odd, disconcertingly strange, faintly weird, peculiar.

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THERE'S A GREAT DEAL GOING ON

Cricket

As Michael Atherton's squad prepare to fly out next week for England's first Test series in South Africa for 31 years, **John Perlman** meets Bob Woolmer, a self-proclaimed British bulldog who now aims to topple his former team as coach of the opposition

The England old boy who is out to turn the tables

BOB WOOLMER loves talking cricket but he likes watching cricketers more, even if the players nearby are doing little more than stretching and light running.

In the small gallery at South African cricket's Academy in Johannesburg, where young players get the rounded education Woolmer believes in so strongly, his thoughts on his team's readiness to meet England keep coming back to him. He is a happy camp and the head scout is quietly proud of that. "The desire in this particular side is to win," he says. "I've got a lot of competition for places. Al-

lan Lamb and Ian Botham said recently that we haven't got depth but what we haven't got is depth of experience. We just have to mature as a team."

Woolmer has just begun his second year as coach of South Africa, with his initial 18-month contract now extended through to March 1997. His sixth Test match in charge, against Zimbabwe in Harare, started well yesterday.

"I always look at my coaching as a long-term thing," he says. "I see the first year as learning about the players and finding out what we need. In the second year you start to build. The third and fourth years are the real growth years."

The cornerstone of the new order has been Woolmer's

relationship with Hansie Cronje, who took over as captaincy last September at the age of 25 from Kepler Wessels. "Hansie has been a very positive influence," Woolmer says. "He's a terrific man-manager and a dynamic individual."

A three-Test series against New Zealand followed Cronje's appointment — South Africa won it 2-1 after losing the first — and Woolmer began to apply methods fine-tuned at Edgbaston, where he was Warwickshire's coach. There were two and a half days of sessions in the nets, one on one, hour after hour. And there were Woolmer's trademark "mark" sessions, getting players to set goals for themselves and honing their mental strength in pursuit of them.

"We make people aware of why they have to do things and we ask players what their goals are," he says. "It's not a case of saying: 'You will do that. It's a case of saying: 'Wouldn't it be better to be there rather than where you are now?'"

Mike Procter, Woolmer's predecessor, had not performed badly — a World Cup semi-final, series wins over India and Sri Lanka (both away from home) and shares of the spoils with England and Australia.

But, says Ali Bacher, managing director of the United Cricket Board of South Africa, "our cricket was becoming stereotyped. We had guts and determination but there comes a time when you need more than that to succeed."

South Africa's players, Bacher says, "are very focused on the technical side. I don't think it's better technical coach in the world cricket than Bob. He has also brought in innovation and flair and the need for improvisation. He's bursting with ideas and sometimes I have to hold him back."

Bacher did not manage to hold back one Woolmer innovation — the team's reverse sweep. Woolmer must have



Net work... the coach Bob Woolmer gets his message across before the one-off Test against Zimbabwe

chucked when Fanie de Villiers executed one so perfectly during a joyous 66 not out off 68 balls against Pakistan at the Wanderers.

Woolmer refuses to say much about his general team tactics but he is clearly relishing the prospect of Brett Schultz partnering Allan Donald and says the spinner Pat Symcox has come on. He has high regard for the opener Gary Kirsten and high hopes for Daryll Cullinan, who "is going to be a very, very fine Test player".

He is, however, noticeably tetchy on the subject of South Africa's ability with the bat. "Batting is really down to experience," he says. "I think there are some players here and it's a question of getting them to think more about each innings and to develop game plans."

But the top six is not yet settled and some younger players may come into contention, notably Free State's Gerhardus Liebenberg, who flourished on a recent under-24 tour of Sri Lanka after following Woolmer's advice to stop worrying and express himself.

That is advice likely to be given to the whole team in the games against England, who Woolmer believes were flattered by their series draw against West Indies this summer. "I thought the West Indian bowling was a shadow of its former self," he says. "They didn't fire together as a bowling unit." He acknowledges that England will be "a very tough side" but, like the South African public, whose cricketing hopes have been jerked skywards by success in the rugby union World Cup, he is confident his side can win.

What they want most of all is victory over the country of Woolmer's birth. "This nationality thing is a difficult one," says Woolmer, who once described himself as "the original British bulldog". His wife Gillian is South African and he has been coaching in South Africa since 1970.

"I see myself as an Englishman but I don't have any problems with trying to beat England. I suppose I'm a mercenary in that respect," he says with a look that suggests he does not really believe he is.

"When England play Australia I'm very much an Englishman but I have a job to do — to beat England."

To that end Woolmer has gathered around him a support team which includes Dr

Schultz bags a fearsome four

SOUTH AFRICA's left-arm fast bowler Brett Schultz burst back on to the international scene with four Zimbabwe wickets and a reprimand from the match referee Barry Jarman on the first day of the one-off Test in Harare.

Schultz, playing his first Test for 26 months after chronic knee problems, took four for 54 and Allan Donald three for 42 as Zimbabwe were dismissed for 170.

Heath Streak, having given Zimbabwe six innings a late flourish with 63, his maiden Test half-century, then took two wickets to leave South Africa on 74 for three at the close of the first day.

Schultz's impressive return was marked by an outburst when he had Dave Houghton caught behind by Dave Richardson for five, the bowler pointing Zimbabwe's former captain

towards the pavilion with a clenched-fist gesture. Schultz was subsequently reprimanded by Jarman.

ZIMBABWE
First innings
1 Dettler c Donald b Donald 1
2 G Flower c Richardson b Donald 24
3 A Watson c Schultz b Donald 5
4 D Houghton c Richardson b Schultz 5
5 A Campbell c Richardson b Schultz 5
6 D Houghton c Richardson b Schultz 5
7 W White c Richardson b Schultz 5
8 P Symcox c Richardson b Schultz 5
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2.15 Mr Felix	3.55 General Rusty
2.30 Mr Felix	4.00 Baroque
2.40 Mr Felix	4.10 Daily Starlight

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10 SPORTS NEWS

The Guardian Saturday October 14 1985

Soccer

Young artist blessed with a finishing touch

Paul Weaver on Robbie Fowler, the brilliant 20-year-old Liverpool striker with an unerring eye for a goal

IT WAS on Newsnight that Anthony Howard unravelled politics for the country. "Politics is like chess," he explained. "You throw all the cards in the air and when they come down it's a different ball game."

Watching England in Olo's Ulfvass Stadium on Wednesday evening some might have felt Terry Venables had a similar vision of England's football: the formation, with Alan Shearer the solitary forlorn forward, resembled a Christmas tree decorated by Scrooge.

Shearer's last goal for England came 733 minutes and over a year ago. The last six games have brought one win and three goalless draws, all of which has prompted suggestions that Robbie Fowler, England's most gifted young goalscorer, should be promoted immediately and become an established member of next year's European Championship side.

For a footballer who could become the first to go for £10 million, Fowler's qualities seemed difficult to identify for Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, at the club's Melwood training headquarters yesterday.

"Well," he said, stroking his chin doubtfully as if describing a missing person to the police, "he's strong but not very strong — not enough to rely on. He hasn't got tremendous pace either, although he has some. He's just got this magnificent eye for goal once he gets in the box. I noticed it when he was a schoolboy playing against my last years back. He will score

goals at any level." He has managed 58 in a season and a half for Liverpool, the sort of form that has persuaded the club they can leave out Ian Rush.

"If he can go on adding to his game while continuing to score goals the way he does he can be as good as anybody that has ever been," added Evans. "Last season there were a few problems but nothing serious, just kids' things. This season he has been more mature on and off the pitch, even though he can't stop telling jokes all from the bench. One of these days someone will laugh."

There is a family feeling at Melwood. Behind Roy was Ronnie and nearby Sammy was talking to Tommy. Fowler is no newcomer. He is only 20 but has been at Anfield for eight years.

Steve Highbury, the club's youth development officer, guided the prodigy's progress until Graeme Souness pitched him into the first team two years ago. "Robbie is unusual in that he has done his learning within the team. Historically, at Liverpool you do your learning before you get into the side."

"We all knew Robbie had a unique ability to score goals. I've seen him score four or five in a game on a dozen or more occasions. He's a one off, good in the air, great balance and terrific self-belief. No player I have ever seen comes from the same mould. And he's not the product of coaching — we've just provided the right environment for him."

"He's a free spirit and if he

misses two or three chances the head will never drop."

As for the man himself, there is clear evidence of his recently acquired stardom. The council estate in Torrish has given way to a £300,000, five-bedroom, Tudor-style home. "It's for the family — mum still sets the rules." The asthmatic old Fleeta has also made way for a N-reg Audi.

More encouraging — for Fowler claims to have grown up in the past year — is his hairstyle. The Gazza-style blond rinse is reverting to his old brown. And there has been no trouble recently. In April, less than 24 hours after beating Chris Sutton and Nick Barnby to the PFA's Young Player of the Year award, he was fined £1,000 by the FA for hitchhiking up his shorts during the Boxing Day game at Leicester. There was also a punch-up with his team-mate Neil Ruddock and he was linked to damage to a hotel on an England Under-21 tour to Portugal.

"I needed to grow up but I have done. And this season, on the pitch, I'm playing less as an individual, more as a team man. But I've still managed nine goals. And Rushy has been brilliant helping me. Fowler was only eight when Rush won his Golden Boots award."

Fowler is football's Billy Whizz. Last season he scored a hat-trick in five minutes against Arsenal and this season there were four against Bolton. The night he scored five against Fulham in the Coca-Cola Cup he celebrated at his local Chinese restaurant by ordering wun ton soup.

Alan Hansen rates him above Shearer as a pure goalscorer. "He will be genuine world class within 18 months," he says. But can England wait that long?



Striking appearance... the blond mop is going as the youthful Fowler matures on and off the field

Leaving Brazil for chilly

Soccer Diary

Martin Thorpe

EVERYONE seems to think that Juninho is somehow loopy to be swapping the samba and sunshine of São Paulo for the brass-band drizzle of Middlesbrough. But according to The Inside Guide to Brazil, São Paulo is not the shangri-la one might imagine. "It is saddled with teeming slums," says the book. "Five million of its residents live in tin and wood hovels or shabby tenements where 100 people may share a bathroom and where children play with mud and garbage in the backyard. A hilly ring of working-class suburbs is lit, lit, lit, paved and strided with thousands of miles of open sewers."

No, the change most likely to affect Juninho is the climate. It will be interesting to see how he copes with a freezing January night at the Riverside Stadium given that he wore gloves playing for Brazil at Goodison Park — in June.

THE criticism came thick and fast after Terry Venables' team had bored for England on Wednesday. "We must bring in more creative players," said one coach. "Our game is too static. Everyone can read what we do." The coach was talking about Norway.

CRITICISM of the much-maligned manager of Italy Arrigo Sacchi has got so bad that one critic has set up an "anti-Sacchi club", open to any fan who dislikes Sacchi. With all membership fees going to charity. In fact when Sacchi was asked on television if he would be joining, he shrugged his shoulders and said: "Why not?"

A, THE old ones are the best. Apparently, Johnnie Cochran has agreed to come and fix Manchester City's defence once he has sorted out Stevie Wonder's driving licence.

SO YOU think soccer merchandising has got out of hand? In the United States you can buy a chair in Miami Dolphin colours with side pocket for TV remote control. Or how about an NFL Deluxe Snack helmet containing a microwave-safe, reusable bowl and dish for snacks and dips? Or for your dog, a mesh T-shirt in team colours or an NFL Dog Bed "with synthetic fibre and aromatic cedar-chip fill".

LOW wages and fan abuse have been replaced as the main topic of conversation at the Argentinean referees' twice-monthly group therapy sessions — by the antics of Diego Maradona.

Ever the sportsman, the banned of God has just returned from his 15-month suspension for abuse. In his comeback game for Boca Juniors he constantly challenged the referee's decisions and admitted afterwards "purposely making the referee's life difficult by appealing for non-existent fouls".

"Maradona is a regular topic," confirmed the referees' official psychologist Emilio Chiesi. "We're not used to refereeing matches with the likes of Diego," added one referee. "In theory we should be able to handle anything. But this is different." Nobody wants to referee Boca games, so from now on, Maradona will be picked from a hat.

AND Sunderland, who have converted just one of their last eight penalties, want to sign Chris Waddle?

ADDING a Y to players' names has long been used by managers as an accepted form of endearment. Thus there is Giggsy, Hughiesy, Rusky etc. It is just that Barry Horne has asked the new Wales manager Bobby Gould to please stop calling him Horney.

TALKING of Bobby Gould, here is Bobby Gould talking about Nathan Blake's versatility. "If he wants to get hold of it and take in a direction which I don't think he really envisages in his own mind at this time, he could be somebody a lot of people would enthuse about."

AND finally, if England needed someone more positive in midfield, why didn't they get David Hillier (asks Peter Coyne of Cambridge).

Chelsea sign Petrescu in £2.3m deal

Russell Thomas

LENN HODDLE applied new selection pressure points to his Chelsea team yesterday when he invested £2.3 million in another foreigner. Romanian's versatile international Dan Petrescu.

Chelsea's manager has been recently linked with midfielders in his search for a player to stimulate competition for places. In taking Petrescu from Sheffield Wednesday he has secured not only a player but also someone comfortable in a number of roles.

All parties appeared delighted with the deal, completed after a week of negotiations. Chelsea have pursued Petrescu, 27, since the summer and finally granted the Romanian his publicised wish to play alongside Ruud Geulit at Stamford Bridge.

That desire, accompanied by Petrescu's thinly veiled criticism of Wednesday — "I want to play for a club with ambition and ability" — last month angered the new Hillsborough manager David Pleat, who threatened to banish him to the reserves but relented after an apology from the player. But at the same time Petrescu's Italian agent insisted Wednesday pay the player more or let him leave.

Pleat has now made a £1

million profit for Wednesday in 14 months on the player bought by Trevor Francis. "Chelsea have got their man and we have got our price," said Pleat. "We feel we can cope with the loss of Dan."

Selling Petrescu, added Pleat, "has put money in my pot" and the kitty could well be swollen by the sale of several Wednesday players before Christmas in a major overhaul of his Hillsborough squad.

David Hirst, currently suspended for two games, is likely to be the first to follow the Romanian, although Everton want to pay no more than £1 million, supplemented by a player-exchange, for the Wednesday striker.

Pleat is likely to intensify interest in Arsenal's John Harrison, his former Luton striker, as Hirst's replacement, although Bruce Rioch insists he needs to add to his squad and not reduce it.

Ray Harford completed the deal by Billy McKinlay from Dundee United and Nottingham Forest's Lars Bohinen for a combined £2.5 million in time for the two new men to intensify the competition for Blackburn midfield places against Southampton today. Blackburn received £300,000 when another midfielder Lee Makel signed for Huddersfield, the out-of-contract player preferring the Yorkshire club to Crystal Palace.

Hodgson set for dual role

INTERNAZIONALE were last night given permission to appoint Roy Hodgson as their coach so long as he combines the role with his present job of running the Swiss national side, writes Russell Thomas.

Italy's president Massimo Moratti has agreed to a request from the Swiss federation that Hodgson remains in charge until next June.

• Darren Anderton is al-

most certain to miss England's Wembley international with Switzerland next month. The Tottenham midfielder had been instructed to do only light training for the next fortnight after seeing a specialist yesterday over his groin trouble. But his club, unwilling to risk further problems, are unlikely to play him again for a month, ruling Anderton out of the November 15 game with the Swiss.

Ball and Lee on sky-blue road to nowhere

City are praying the Manchester derby does not go to form today. Ian Ross reports

IT HAS not been a bad couple of weeks for Manchester City. They were victorious over Wycombe Wanderers in the Coca-Cola Cup and a period of tranquillity on the Premiership front. Not much has gone wrong.

For those accustomed to living with fame, respite, however brief, is most welcome. But nothing lasts for ever and the problems will start again this afternoon when City return to Premiership foot-

ball. It is several months since they last won a league game. The night he scored five against Fulham in the Coca-Cola Cup he celebrated at his local Chinese restaurant by ordering wun ton soup.

Alan Hansen rates him above Shearer as a pure goalscorer. "He will be genuine world class within 18 months," he says. But can England wait that long?

Scottish League preview

Rangers may risk McCoist to boost weakened attack

Patrick Glenn

RANGERS' recent scoring rate — only five goals in their last four matches — is beginning to look like Belgium's in the Eurovision Song Contest. It is commensurate with the dwindling number of their quality strikers.

With Mark Hateley off to QPR, Oleg Salenko a hamstring victim and Ally McCoist suffering a damaged thigh, the Scottish champions may have to protect their current lead over the Premier Division pack at Partick Thistle today with only one recognised forward — Gordon Durie — in their squad.

McCoist has presented the manager Walter Smith with a dilemma: he has recovered more quickly than expected and returned to training. Smith has to decide whether to risk recurrence and play him at Partick, or keep him in reserve for Juventus in the Champions' League on Wednesday.

"If we don't play McCoist, we won't know his true condition and if we do, he could be set back," said Smith. "I know we are difficult to beat just now because our defence looks so sound, but I've been wondering how we're going to win this one if McCoist and Salenko are missing."

"Still, we've found in simi-

lar circumstances in the past that the goals can come from elsewhere."

In fact last week the young defender Craig Moore came off the bench at Pittodrie to head an improbable primer against Aberdeen and leave the latter five points adrift at the end of a day on which he had hoped to go top.

Aberdeen, greatly improved after last season's ordeal in the relegation zone, travel to Motherwell — last year's runners-up — with the same 10 outfield players for the 10th successive match. That means the international striker Duncan Shearer and the £1 million midfielder Paul Bernard remain on the bench.

Motherwell's worrying start to the season has prompted muttering in the Fir Park stands. "If I were in the stands, I would be complaining as well," said the manager Alex McLeish.

"If Alex Ferguson and Walter Smith have to take stick, I can hardly be immune. There is a gap opening between us and the top teams and that is worrying."

Second-placed Celtic are at home to Hibernian with the captain Paul McStay back after missing last week's victory over Thistle, but with the Scotland full-back Tosh McKinlay being kept for Thursday's Cup Winners' Cup meeting with Paris St Germain.

many moons ago. If Lee is coming under increasing pressure from those whose initial sense of optimism has been eaten away by creeping suspicion, the man he recently installed as manager, Alan Ball, is on the rack. So what next for them as they hurtle arm in arm down the road to nowhere?

It is a trip to neighbouring United, unfortunately. York City may beg to differ but, traditionally, Old Trafford is the place where fantasies perish rather than prosper.

Predictably defiance was oozing out of Matine Road yesterday. All and sundry were

A N Other

FEW young footballers have celebrated their 19th birthdays in the manner of this gifted marksman. His party had 100,000 guests and with a couple of nods he helped extinguish the candles in a distant stadium.

It was, incidentally, the first time this season and welcome back the Rangers Myers and Clark. But Scotland starts a three-match tour after being sent off against Arsenal and Sunderland in a run of four consecutive defeats.

Blackburn v Southampton Norway's Bohinen should make his debut for the champions but McKinlay is unlikely to figure yet. The goalkeeper Flowers has recovered from an elbow injury and along with Shearer plays against his old club.

Sunder are hoping that their midweek League Cup tie with Manchester United will force them to withdraw from the Northern Ireland strand in midweek, with Heaney or Hughes ready to deputise.

Leeds v Arsenal Motherwell came away through Scotland's midweek defeat in Sweden and will head home to face the reserves rather than the first team. It is not expected.

Everton are boosted by the return of Arsenal and Manchester as they look to halt a run of four consecutive defeats.

Performance of the week: Ryan Giggs (Wales), who on Wednesday had Bertie Vogts wishing aloud that the Manchester United winger had been born in Germany.

TEAM SHEET

Aston Villa v Chelsea

The Villa captain Townsend is serving a one-match suspension after being sent off against Nottingham Forest and misses the meeting with his old club. Sturges takes his place in midfield with Neilman running to the defence after Ru, while Johnson has been moved to the right wing. Striker Milosavljevic is a surprise inclusion. Chelsea include Ricketts, who had a summer tour operation, in their squad for the first time this season and welcome back the Rangers Myers and Clark. But Scotland starts a three-match tour after being sent off against Arsenal and Sunderland in a run of four consecutive defeats.

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Ice Hockey

Veteran Canadians club ruling body with legal bill

Vic Batchelder

DAVID FRAME, the chief executive of the British Ice Hockey Association, yesterday defended the handling of this season's influx of Canadians into the British League.

He admitted that the governing body faced a £5,000 bill for legal costs incurred by two veteran Canadian players, Chris Kelland, 38, and

Mike O'Connor, 33, but said: "In law, our hands are tied."

The bill stems from a BIIHA proposal during the summer to rescind British status for imported players, including the Canadian pair who had played 10 seasons in the British League and gained British passports. The move was prompted by an increase in players coming here and claiming British citizenship.

The Canadian pair initiated legal action aimed at stopping

the change and the association had to back down due to its limited financial situation. It largely relies on funding from clubs and Frame said: "We were prepared to take Kelland and O'Connor on but the clubs said no, they wouldn't back us financially, despite supporting us morally."

"By that time they [the players] had already briefed a barrister and gone to court for an injunction, so we were

faced with those costs anyway."

GRAY STAFFAN (v The Netherlands, Milton Keynes, Oct 25); Morrison (Sunderland, Foster (Barnet), Lee (Cardiff), Hope, S. Cooper, J. Ware (Leeds), Strickland (Sheff Wed), Saunders (Milton Keynes), Cole (Bristol), Llewellyn (Manchester), Waghorn (Nottingham), Shaw (Durham), Kirtland (Gillingham), Scott (Milton Keynes), Bradburn, Lambert, D. Smith (Gillingham), Brierley (Barnet), Morgan, Tait (Nottingham), Morrison, Conway (Barnet), Longstaff (Sheff Wed), Garsden (Hull), Burn, Burn (Sheff Wed) is named in defence, subject to getting a British passport.

Athletics

McColgan runs off to Mexico via Coventry

IZ McCOLGAN is adamant that even the earthquakes in Mexico will not interrupt her build-up to winning next year's Olympic marathon title.

McColgan yesterday confirmed that she still intends flying to central America on Monday for three weeks of altitude training before tackling the Tokyo marathon next month.

"The earthquakes are 350 miles away from where I am

going. I'm not expecting any problems," she said. Tomorrow she runs the BUPA Great Midlands 10-kilometres in Coventry, a race she won 12 months ago after an 18-month injury lay-off.

McColgan, already the fastest Briton over the distance this year when running 32min 27sec in Edinburgh on October 1, says she is looking to go even faster.

"I think I can better 32 minutes," she said. "I know the

course is quick, as I won last year's race. Obviously a lot will depend on the conditions."

Tomorrow will be her fourth race in five weeks. She has already won the BUPA Great North Run, the Caledonian and the South.

Paul Evans misses tomorrow's race, opting instead to compete in Paris. But the men's field still contains many leading domestic runners, including Gary Staines.

RUGBY LEAGUE
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RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP

England expects hatful from Offiah

Paul Fitzpatrick on an easy return for the Wigan wing and a stiffer test for Wales

ENGLAND, with Martin Offiah back in the fold, could be looking for individual and collective records against South Africa at Headingley tonight — and Australia should beat the talented but vulnerable Fijians at Huddersfield to secure their place as Group One runners-up. But the compelling game of the weekend is at Swansea tomorrow where Wales, with Scott Quinnell in their side, meet Western Samoa for the right to play at Old Trafford in the semi-finals, almost certainly against England. Against France at Cardiff on Thursday Western Samoa fulfilled all the good things that had been predicted of them. They ran in 10 tries, landed eight goals through the accurate right boot of John Schuster and achieved impressive fluency and understanding. Their qualities rightly earned the admiration of the Wales coach Clive Griffiths. But he was not overawed. Wales are, after all, a more resilient side than France, who have had a depressing World Cup.

"They showed all the signs of a battle-worn outfit who

had lost the will to fight," said Griffiths. "Western Samoa will find Wales a far tougher proposition."

Griffiths nevertheless admits that this game represents his side's toughest examination since they were reformed in 1991. They have enjoyed some rewarding moments since then, not least last season's European Championship triumph. But a place in the last four of the World Cup could help raise the profile of the sport in Wales to unprecedented levels.

Griffiths is taking one major risk, possibly, Quinnell, who will replace Mark Parrett in the second row, has been dogged by ankle trouble and this will be the Wigan forward's first game since early September.

England, meanwhile, can rotate their squad of players knowing they have already qualified for the semi-finals and knowing too that only the greatest upset in the history of the sport can prevent them finishing top of Group One.

South Africa have been the misfits of the competition, and their stock was not improved with the news that their centre Pierre Grobler had tested positive for

the use of the steroid nandrolone.

In fairness to South Africa they should not have been part of the main event. Their inclusion might have had some merit when first mooted but, admirably as they have done on their fitness, it was always likely they would be out of their depth. They would have been better with the Emerging Nations.

All they can expect tonight is a drubbing, and England must have a chance of relieving Australia of their international record of 95 points, set at Gateshead against South Africa on Tuesday.

A flood of scoring is guaranteed and the voracious Martin Offiah will be hungry for his share. The Wigan winger missed England's first two games because of a thigh strain but could be at the top of the try-scoring list tonight.

ENGLAND: Cook (Leeds); Bentley (Hull), Pugh (Leeds), Mather (Wigan), Offiah (Wigan); Powell (Leeds), Edwards (Leeds); Wigan: Mather (Hull), Cusack (Wigan), West (Auckland Warriors), Baines (Wigan), Joss (St Helens), Clarke (Sydney City Roosters), Subafor (Leeds), Joss (St Helens), Smith (Cardiff), Broadbent (Sheffield), Sampson (Cardiff).

WALES (vs Western Samoa): Harris (Warrington), Dwyer (Widnes), Gifford (St Helens), Davies (Leeds), Warrington, Ellis (North Queensland Cowboys), Sherratt (Wigan), Hall (Wigan), Year (Salford), Mather (Hull), Gidman (Wigan), Pryor (Leeds), Samuels (Cardiff), Jones (St Helens), Phillips (Warrington), Madley (Widnes).



No respite... England's Betts, Farrell and Radlinski, who all take a rest from today's game, did not escape training yesterday

MICHAEL STEELE

Players making the most of passports of convenience

AT LEAST 52 of the players who have donned their country's shirts this week are not playing for the land of their birth, writes Paul Fitzpatrick. World Cup it may be, melting pot it certainly is: of the 10 competing

countries England are alone in not naming one foreign-born player in their squad.

Not only have Wales played the grandparent card to good effect, the Pacific islands that have long been such a deep well of talent for New Zealand rugby are starting to reclaim

their own — notably in the fearsome form of Va'aiga Tuigamala, the former All Black winger now with Wigan.

Wales, resurrected in 1991 after a seven-year absence, would probably have had only a limited life if the foreign rule had not been adopted last season. The decision to extend qualification was taken reluctantly, though, as there were fears that the spirit of the side might be usurped and its credibility undermined.

The quality of the Anglos that answered the call brooked no argument, however, as Kelvin Skerrett, Martin Hall, Neil Cowie, Keiron Cunningham and Iestyn Harris would all have been serious candidates for the England side.

It was not a case of marginal players switching allegiance so as to get the international recognition they would not otherwise have received; indeed, Richie Eyles and Dean Busby had already played for England.

Likewise the New Zealand-born Manns, George and Duane, are sporting Tongan jerseys while Inga the Winger is appearing for Western Samoa alongside his fellow native Kiwis Sam Panapa, Tea Ropati and Se'e Solomons.

Players of this quality clearly boost the game's development in countries not previously associated with rugby league. Hence the bitter comments of Tonga's coach Mike McInnes, formerly with St Helens, after Australia selected the high-class John Hopoate and Jim Dymock. At least Tonga have one Dymock left in Angelo, Jim's big brother.

There was a chance, too, that Australia might have called up Adrian Lam. But the personable and articulate Lam, Papua New Guinea's first rugby league superstar, said his life would not have been worth living if he had rejected Papua New Guinea.

Mix and match



Dual nationals and the teams they finally plumped for.

- France**
Brian Coles (Aus), Carl Jaauvo (Aus)
- Tonga**
Angelo Dymock (Aus), Awen Guttenbell (NZ), Solomon Haumono (NZ), Philip Howlett (NZ), Luke Leilus (NZ), Duane Mann (NZ), George Mann (NZ), Frank Watene (NZ), Willie Wolfram (NZ), Andrew Tangata-Toa (NZ)
- Fiji**
Freddie Roberts (NZ), John Samale (NZ), Apisoleme Degei (Aus)
- South Africa**
John Mudegway (NZ), Gerald Williams (Wal)
- Wales**
Paul Atcheson (Eng), Dean Busby (Eng), Neil Cowie (Eng), Keiron Cunningham (Eng), Richie Eyles (Eng), Martin Hall (Eng), Iestyn Harris (Eng), Kelvin Skerrett (Eng), Gareth Stephens (Eng), Anthony Sullivan (Eng)
- Australia**
Jim Dymock (Tonga), John Hopoate (Tonga)
- Western Samoa**
The former rugby union All Black Va'aiga Tuigamala is the most prominent Kiwi playing for Samoa. He is in good company; all but five of the 25-man squad could play for New Zealand
- New Zealand**
Hiro Okesene (Western Samoa)
- Papua New Guinea**
Adrian Lam (Aus)

GRAPHIC: PADDY ALLEN, GRAPHIC NEWS

Cooks ready to paste minnows

Frank Keating looks into the Emerging Nations tournament, where Pacific islanders can look the super powers in the eye

THE Cook Islands' squad eased themselves from the aircraft at Heathrow yesterday, stretched massively and announced no problems about beginning the seven-team tournament of "emerging nations" as firm favourites. "The guys will readily handle that peg," said the islands' federation president John Kenning. "We know we are the form horses."

The population of the entire islands is less than 14,000 but it will be the United States who kick off the tournament against them at Featherstone on Monday as the minnows, uneasy and insecure. Likewise the Russians when they play the Cook Islands at Leigh on Wednesday. This competition is going to give a nice new quizzical and quirky meaning to cup giant-killing.

The other four in the hat are Ireland, Moldova, Morocco and Scotland. It represents progress all right and proof of rugby league's sudden conversion to an enlightened missionary zeal. "Globally we have made more strides in the last two or three years than in the previous 97

put together," said the RL international liaison officer Neil Tummelshill yesterday.

The Cooks beat the touring BARLA side in 1990 and have acquitted themselves well in the Pacific Cup against neighbours who play on the World Cup's senior stage. They have six clubs, each with four teams, and around 80 players at each. Jason Tenn, the Oldham prop, was waiting to welcome his compatriots yesterday. Two of the game's luminaries, Kevin and Tony Iro, are also sons of the Cook Islands.

It is a nice thought that had the game been 150 years older, Captain James Cook himself might have supported Featherstone Rovers. He was born at Marion, near Pontefract and apprenticed to a shopkeeper in 1780 at Smith, a dozen miles equidistant from Google and Featherstone, where he learned the rudiments of seamanship on that criss-cross of tidal rivers and navigation canals. When told this yesterday, Kenning exclaimed: "Bill Monday's match as the return of Cook's prodigal sons."

The US and its fields full of promise have beguiled rugby

league officials at hand-rubbing intervals down its 100 years. There have been more false dawns for RL in the US than Hollywood lighting men have laid on. The League has invested much money in development but all of it has drained into the sand.

Only eight years ago much was made of yet another launch when New South Wales played Queensland at Long Beach but, admitted an

spade, trying to communicate with US salesmen to whom a spade was "a fantastic piece of unrealised low-tech dynamic which could revolutionise man's entire concept of micro-excitation and achieve unprecedented levels of profitability with a positively guaranteed user-implementation program."

The US play Russia on Friday at Warrington. The two sides last met in the autumn in San Francisco. It was billed unashamedly "The Battle of the Super Powers". Russia won 19-12. After which a US forward and for-

officials, still constipated with prejudice.

Last year the Scottish RU masterfully banned two union players for playing in the Scots' first rugby league international at Gateshead — and backed down abjectly later. And in August the 17-year-old Belfast schoolboy Gavin Gordon was withdrawn from Ireland's team after being threatened with a ban by the Ulster Schools RU. But he has defiantly agreed to play in this World Cup and, if he turns out against Moldova at Rochdale on Monday, he will become the game's youngest ever international.

Moldova boast that their players, backed by the state oil company, have "the comparative acclaim and lifestyle of the Wigan stars".

Morocco's participation is testament to the missionary vision of the former Fulham winger Hussam M'Barki, who returned home to organise what is now a six-team domestic competition from scratch. The rugby federation proved obstructive until the government stepped in and secured league official recognition after "M'Barki's boys" had so enlivened the world seven tournament at Sydney in February. Morocco begin against Moldova at Northampton on Wednesday.

Moldova boast that their players have 'the comparative acclaim and lifestyle of the Wigan stars'

organiser, "in real terms it achieved not much more than providing a trip to Disneyland for the boys."

In his grand and scholarly official centenary history *A People's Game* (Hodder, £20) Geoffrey Moorhouse suggests the failure of rugby league in the US was caused by the cultural difference of plain-speaking Australians or northern Englishmen, mighty proud of calling a spade a

mar marine Jeff Preston was invited for a trial with Warrington. He answers to the nickname of "Sergeant Slaughter".

On St Patrick's Day in Washington the US team were beaten 24-22 by Ireland in a thrilling contest. In Ireland and Scotland the game has grown healthily since the 1989 student tournament in York. Both sides resent continuing harassment by disband union

Warrington and Wales full-back may join Jonathan Davies at Cardiff

Harris eager to try his hand at union

David Plummer

IESTYN HARRIS, the 19-year-old Wales and Warrington full-back, has been approached by two Welsh rugby union clubs during the World Cup.

One of them is believed to be Cardiff, who are also hoping to sign the Wales captain Jonathan Davies, who also plays for Warrington.

Harris may be seriously entertaining the notion of switching between league and union. "With league now becoming a summer sport," he

said, "it should be possible to play both codes in the same year."

"I would love to have a crack at union. I only played a couple of times at school but, with the game having gone professional, it is an option for players like me now."

"I have played in the same club and international team with Jonathan in league and it is a tantalising thought that I could do the same in union. Playing in the Five Nations is something I never imagined I would even be able to dream of."

● The New Zealand Rugby

League apologised to the World Cup organisers yesterday after their hooker Syd Eru tested positive for pseudoephedrine.

The New Zealand spokesman Graham Carden said: "We are now awaiting the results of the second drug sample but can only apologise for bringing the tournament bad publicity."

"We are mystified at Syd's positive testing because he assured us his preparation for the World Cup has been no different to that back home."

"We are disappointed that one of our players has been

found in this position and we would expect players at this level to err on the side of conservatism."

"Syd was tested four times during the World Cup with Auckland Warriors and there were no problems."

"He has not taken any cough remedies but does take a replacement supplement which does not contain any banned substances, although we will have that tested."

"Syd has been one of the success stories in New Zealand this year, winning a place in the Auckland side from Duane Mann and also

gaining an international spot."

● Warrington Town are to sign the Western Samoa prop forward Lafale Filipo, 25, who plays for the New Zealand club North Harbour, as an overseas replacement for the Fijian forward James Pickersley, who broke an ankle playing for Sydney Bulldogs in the summer.

● Bradford Bulls today signed Simon Knox, a back-row forward and former BARLA international, from Carlisle on the eve of his 23rd birthday. No fee has yet been agreed.

Snooker

Amateurs keep open mind in world championship

Clive Everton

PROFESSIONALS will compete for the first time in the world amateur championship in Bristol from November 10 to 25 as the game takes another step towards becoming completely "open". Taking over at short notice from the original hosts Egypt, the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association has underwritten the event to the tune of £75,000 and secured Embassy as the sponsor.

The International Billiards and Snooker Federation, the amateur governing body, has ruled that professionals ranked lower than 128 in the world will be eligible.

The entry of 57 from 42 countries is a far cry from the five from four countries who contested the inaugural event in 1983.

It is likely that 96 will become the cut-off point if the WPBSA changes its qualifying system for world ranking events. Four years ago the WPBSA decided that a professional circuit of 128 players with only 10 coming in and 10 dropping out each year was blocking too many high-quality young players.

It threw its membership open to anyone paying the £500 enrolment fee. This led to such huge fields for its ranking tournaments that the summer qualifying extravaganza at Blackpool has had to run on 22 tables. The WPBSA is now considering a qualifying scheme whereby 32 would join the top 64 in the rankings for all its ranking events.

Everyone else would be eligible to compete on a WPBSA satellite circuit and in amateur events — and to attempt to qualify again the following summer.



Sweet 16th... Elkington chips to the green FRANK BARON

Golf

Montgomerie suffers slow death

Derek Lawrenson sees the Scot go down manfully to the perfection of Steve Elkington

STEVE ELKINGTON had surgery on his sinuses last year to alleviate an allergy to grass. Heaven knows what Montgomerie can do to overcome his allergy to the Australian.

The pair first met at Houston college as teenagers, where Elkington was much the superior golfer. And he has still got his nose in front. Elkington won the USPGA Championship last August, his first major, by defeating Montgomerie in a sudden-death play-off.

At Wentworth yesterday there was nothing sudden about Montgomerie's loss. He played beautifully all day but shadowing him throughout was the game's

sweetest swinger, complete with the assassin's instinct that always accompanies a player in peak form.

"I was eight under for the day but I ran into the wrong man at the wrong time. Sometimes you have to how and say 'well done' and come back another day," said Montgomerie.

The draw could hardly have been less kind. After 36 holes the previous day, and with an injured wrist to worry about, the last person Montgomerie needed was Elkington, the man with the swing that brooks no argument. It is so simple there does not appear to be anything that could go wrong with it. The perfect grip, perfect stance

and the smoothest backswing and follow-through.

Montgomerie was ahead only twice in the match and on each occasion Elkington came up with a swift response, birdying the 6th to cancel out Montgomerie's four at the long 4th and registering an eagle-three at the 12th to square the match again following the Scot's birdie at the previous hole.

As with Montgomerie, experience has fuelled Elkington's rising self-belief but the sinus surgery helped as well. "My sinuses were basically rebuilt so that I could breathe freely and get the pollen out of my nose quickly. It's like having a four-lane highway where once I had just one."

Montgomerie's failure to birdie either of the last two holes meant he lunched two down, a margin that still

confronted him with nine holes to play. Held up on every second shot, not to say when Elkington practically whooped his labours approach by hitting practice putts while the pair behind were waiting in the middle of the fairway, the Scot's vision began to take in every moving steward and spectator.

At times the head was down but his competitive spirit is such that, even when Elkington practically holed his tee shot to the short 10th, Montgomerie matched the resultant birdie. Ultimately it needed a chip-in at the 13th from Elkington to turn the match his way.

"I made three birdies in four holes from the 10th and got nowhere," Montgomerie lamented. It was that sort of game.

South Africa's pacemen strike again, page 9
Offiah recalled to England's wing, page 11

The golden promise of Robbie Fowler, page 10

SportsGuardian

WORLD MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP



Warming to his task... Els misses the green on the 11th yesterday but he led Janzen through the match and the American did well to hang on to the 33rd PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Els back on trail of revenge

David Davies at Wentworth sees the South African holder dismiss the fancied Janzen

IT DOES not do to mess with Ernie Els. Yesterday's man who had done so, Lee Janzen, was summarily dismissed by the South African from the Toyota World Match Play Championship, losing four and three after being four or five down for most of the day. Janzen began the day as one of the favourites for the title, having made almost \$1.5 million (£968,000) this year in a hugely successful United States campaign. He ended it seven under par and on his way back to Heathrow, there to board Concorde home. Els, round in 64 — eight under — in the morning, was approximately four more under in the afternoon and had not been seriously troubled.

It was an intended revenge for Els. "I have seen a little too much of Lee's back

recently," said the South African afterwards, referring to two US Tour events that he feels he could have won but for a couple of brilliant bursts by Janzen. The first was the 1994 Buick Classic, the second the Sprint International two months ago.

In fact Els, on the surface the most amiable of men, has a retentive memory and a thirst for revenge that is at odds with his ready smile. Last year in the second round of this event he beat Severiano Ballesteros who, only three weeks earlier, had overtaken him over the last nine holes of the German Masters, to win. That got him a semi-final match with Jose-Maria Olazabal who, six months earlier, had inflicted a similar indignity on Els in the Volvo PGA championship. He went the way of his compatriot.

After beating Ballesteros — he was 11 under when he won two and one — the theme of the questioning was more about whether he was concerned about trampling on a legend. He fended it off gently until, just before leaving, he said quietly: "He played well, but I was the better man today."

He was the better man yesterday, too, a fact readily conceded by Janzen. "He is one great player," said the American, "especially when he is driving it like he was today. And when he is putting it like he was today he can beat anyone any time."

"There wasn't much I could do against such great golf but I was patient, never panicked. I kept thinking, 'Don't press, just try and hit a good shot and win a hole wherever you can.' Just how well Els was playing was demonstrated by the fact that it took Janzen 16 holes before he did win one — he won only six in the 33-hole match. Nevertheless he said:

"I played well today but to have stayed with him I would have had to have played perfect golf."

Janzen did not, in fact, "stay" with Els in another, slightly caustic sense. Els said he had "wanted to get my nose in front early" and he achieved that by birdying three of the first four holes and going two up. But it was noticeable that wherever possible the big South African literally led from the front. Whether consciously or not, he was first off the green, first off the tee and, when the time

came after the first 18 holes, he was first into the clubhouse, dressed in black, the old-time gunslinger. Five down with nine to play he was dead but would not lie down and he hit a tee shot at the 10th to 18 inches. He missed the green at the 11th to be five down with seven to play and then eagled the 12th. Survival was still a possibility but then, with his man crawling in the dust, Els produced a 50-foot birdie putt at the 13th and, although it took two more holes, Janzen duly expired.

Els now has to face Bernhard Langer, who beat Nick Price by one hole. Price is playing precisely the brand of golf through the green that brought him three major championships in two years.

The difference is that the 10-15th putts are not going in quite so regularly and, although Langer was only six under for the day, Price was never the frightening proposition of recent years. He does, however, think his friend Els might become that, and more.

"Els has so much in reserve," said Price, "that people are going to have a tough time beating him. We might find we have a new Match Play King of the World out there in Ernie."

Ben Crenshaw was unable to lift his game to the challenge. Costantino Rocca was seven shots better than the American in the morning, and seven up. Crenshaw, out in 32 in the afternoon, got back to only three down but that was as far as it went. "He's a beautiful golfer," said Crenshaw, who knows one when he sees one.

Derek Lawrenson, page 15

Results

QUARTER-FINALS
Els (SA) bt L. Janzen (US) 4 and 3.
S. Langer (Ger) bt N. Price (Zim) 1 up.
S. Elkington (Aus) bt C. Montgomerie (GB) 2 and 1.
C. Rocca (It) bt B. Crenshaw (US) 3 and 2.
SEMI-FINALS
Els v Langer; Elkington v Rocca.

Venison joins samba party

Ian Ross

BARRY VENISON, one of the North-east's own, is set to match — or even beat — the Boy from Brazil to Middlesbrough. While the \$4.75 million Juninho is due on Teesside on Tuesday for his medical, Venison is expected to cut short his ill-fated Turkish adventure this weekend and become Middlesbrough's latest recruit, taking Bryan Robson's spending since summer past £11 million.

A little over three months after he departed Newcastle United to join Istanbul's leading team Galatasaray Venison is poised to return to England and sign for one of the Premiership's most ambitious clubs.

Galatasaray, coached by the former Rangers and Liverpool manager Graeme Souness, have agreed to Venison's transfer request and, if agreement on personal terms can be reached, he will move to Teesside for £950,000.

The first indication that the former England international defender was disenchanted

with life on the shores of the Bosphorus came last month when he publicly criticised Galatasaray officials after a row over a hotel bill. Venison will be the second Souness import to return home following the recent sale of Mike Marsh to Southampton.

The Consett-born Venison would complete a treble of North-east clubs, the 31-year-old player having started his career at Sunderland.

Juninho's arrival from São Paulo will be a much more trumpeted affair. A 50-piece samba band will perform outside the Riverside Stadium to greet the Brazilian midfielder on Tuesday.

Robson said: "We aim to ensure that Juninho knows how welcome he is on Teesside and that he feels well and truly at home. We are sure the fans will turn up in force to meet our new signing."

Juninho will then return to Brazil to await a work permit, which Middlesbrough are confident will arrive in time for the midfielder to make his debut at Manchester United on October 28.

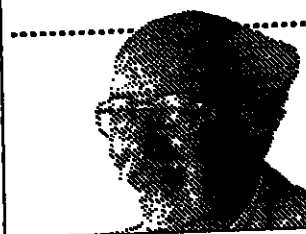
More soccer, page 10



Jimmy Nail has a tip for all the blokes: if you want to wear your sister's dress, best pick a woollen one because wool has more give in it. It's a tip he picked up fronting a band in Newcastle in the 1970s.

Outlook page 18

Best wishes when chips are down



David Lacey

ON ONE morning this week Terry Venables found his head in a media noose. On another he discovered he had been given a vote of confidence by the chairman of the Football Association, Sir Bert Millichip. Which phenomenon gave him greater cause for alarm is anyone's guess.

It has been a fairly typical week in the life of an England boss. Moribund speculation about team selection was followed by a nondescript performance in Norway, then damning headlines and another piece of vague Millichippiery. This time, it is true, the situation was further confused by a report that Internazionale had approached Venables but that the England coach had rejected the £200,000-a-year offer. The Milan club, meanwhile, have appointed Roy Hodgson, English coach of the successful Switzerland team, and already Helenio Herrera, a famous name from Inter's past, has written him off.

Venables, it would seem, showed good judgment in turning down a stint in an Italian inferno so he could refind the fading embers of England's international prestige. He has since hinted the FA might repay this loyalty by clarifying his position before the 1996 European Championship, after which his two-year contract expires.

TALKS involving Venables, Millichip and Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, took place in Oslo this week but the situation remains much as it did the day Venables was appointed. If England do well in the European Championship he may still be in charge for the 1998 World Cup qualifiers. A top of 1992 proportions, when Graham Taylor was turpined in Sweden, and the FA might think again.

Millichip's statement that he wants Venables to stay until after the next World Cup is more a matter of expecta-

tion than avowed intent; a bit like your average Tory averring that John Major will lead the party into the next election. In any case the 81-year-old Sir Bert is himself due to step down as FA chairman after Euro 96.

In the meantime there is more evidence of the England agenda being set by back-page headlines. Should He Go? demanded one tabloid yesterday as it launched a phone-in to pick Venables's successor. But how can the man go when, in the context of a major tournament, he has yet to arrive? Taylor ended his first year as manager by observing that the office no longer commanded respect. He was not wrong. When the FA puts someone in charge of the England team it hands the media a party balloon which, for a few months, becomes the object of innocent enjoyment before someone produces a pin.

Because England, as hosts, do not have to qualify for Euro 96 it is difficult to criticise Venables on specific points. The proper time to start judging him will be when England open the tournament on June 8. Discussion concerning, say, the present lack of goals is not the same as questioning the man's ability to do the job.

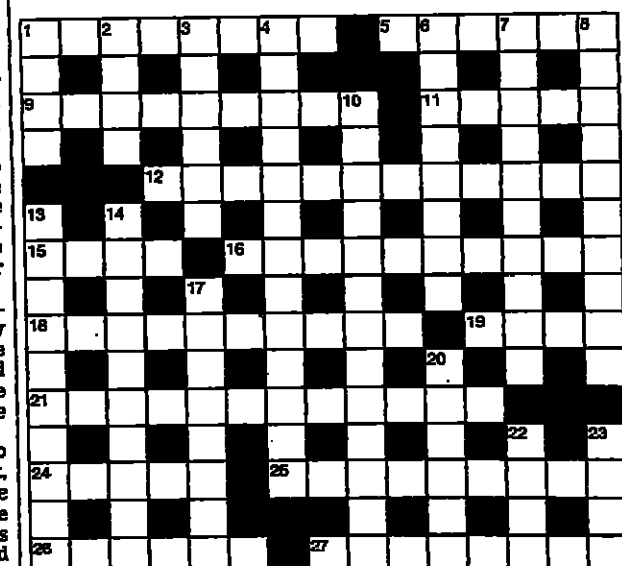
THIS week has brought Venables his first taste of the sort of thing Bobby Robson endured after England's failure in the 1988 European Championship had found some critics doubting his credentials for the 1990 World Cup. After an experimental England team had been held to 1-1 in Saudi Arabia Robson faced such headlines as "Desert Pratts" and "Go For The Love Of Allah". On that occasion Millichip publicly gave Robson his backing but less than two years later the FA chairman was to be found implying that the England manager's contract would not be renewed after Italia 90. Eventually Robson set off for Italy as manager-elect of PSV Eindhoven, having been plagued by media allegations about his private life and vilified by the more poisonous pens.

Now this relatively successful pre-tournament period in England's international history is regarded as a golden age. Another may be in the offing and at least Venables should be given the chance to find out. He should not be needing Sir Blurt's best wishes, not yet.

Guardian COLLINS Crossword 20,472

A special leather-bound edition of Collins English Dictionary worth £50 to the first correct entry drawn, plus copies of Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus to the next three entries. Entries to Guardian Crossword No 20,472, 6 Bushy Hall Road, Bushey, Herts., WD23 2EA, by first post on Friday, or by fax to 01923 225885. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday October 23.

Name
Address



Set by Bunthorne

Across

- 1 Natural disseminator gives publicity to degree students (8)
- 5 Antonioni's aggrandizement (4-2)
- 9 Mainliner all steamed up? So take heroin, foolishly (4,5)
- 11 Grandmother of the French ostrich (5)
- 12 Wonder if something "asn't gone wrong (12)
- 13 Carol given tongue in the woodwind (4)
- 16 Measure out one thousand crisp ones. Humbug! (10)

18 Lori De Sade's cruel condition of those who've been up too long (6-4)

19 Die world on the edge of main boob? (4)

21 Counsel's abstract? (5,7)

24 Pleasure dome's showing rust, naturally (5)

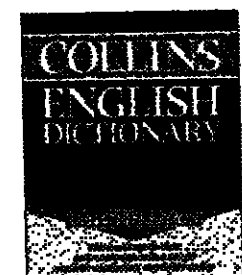
25 What's well produced and changed in the services? (6,3)

26 Leave it out in side-street? (6)

27 Sailors often got around this poor chaplain (4,4)

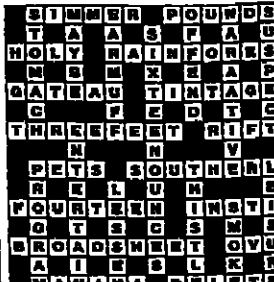
Down

- 1 Starched soft edge (4)
- 2 Follow left work to go to bed (4)



- 3 Best man in command (6)
- 4 Leader of rum folderols, I presume (4,2,7)
- 6 Hub-nub (8)
- 7 Heard Franz's cycle died, added anti-freeze etc (10)
- 8 Pluto contains mass, smashes atom and releases redskin (4,6)
- 10 Imagine a moral dilemma in Italy (6-7)
- 13 Shavian captain converted supporters going South (10)
- 14 Last possible time to board ship: what boredom (10)
- 17 Hear some idiots made a day of it (4) (3,5)
- 20 Unorthodox hairpiece (6)
- 22 Was he game to go to China? (4)
- 23 Oulche tossed in tarragon, al fresco (4)

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The Guardian Outlook

Michael Portillo's fantasy on a British theme at the Tory party conference this week was just one of the outbursts about loss of control over a nation and its future. IAN BURUMA meets the Eurosceptics and the Europhiles

Photographs by
DON MCPHEE



The Tories show their true stripes

BAVARIANS wear funny hats. They have worn funny hats with particular relish since 1871. Indeed, some Bavarians who had never worn funny hats before began to sport them as though the hats could provide some sense of continuity in times of rapid change. At the Tory party conference in Blackpool I was often reminded of Bavaria.

The folk costume is different. Tories go in for stripes and polka dots. Everywhere you looked, among the rank and file, among the younger Tory journalists backstage, and on the platform too, you saw striped suits, striped shirts, polka-dot ties and even a polka-dot dress. A Tory crowd is like Regency wallpaper come alive.

The Tory uniform, like the Bavarian *tracht*, looks theatrical and deliberately anachronistic. It is an assertion of identity in a political party that has set itself up as the guardian of nationhood. The stripes are like the word "British" which was bandied about at the conference to ward off the evil demons of "Europe". The product peddled had little to do

with new ideas or policies, but everything to do with image. To be a Tory is to be British; to be Labour is to "surrender to Europe". And to be British is to wear stripes.

Are the polka-dotted Tories aware of self-parody? Some of the more intelligent ones probably are. It is hard to think of Simon Heffer, say, as anything but a self-made comic character. And I cannot imagine that one young man I saw, who wore a wig of the same colour and consistency as Teresa Gorman's hair, took himself entirely seriously. But among the party activists, Britishness is no joking matter.

Listening to some of the warm-up acts to Michael Portillo's speech, or the opinions at fringe meetings, one got the impression not of humour, but of resentment. This was especially true of the younger Tories. "Here in Blackpool," barked one young man with ratty hair, "the only flag we Conservatives are proud to raise is the Union Jack!" Another young man whined that "Brussels" was taking away "our history". And yet another speaker — who had a French name, but made up for it by wearing very loud stripes — complained that "Europe" had "shackled us", preventing

British troops from stopping the war in Bosnia. Britain, he hollered to great acclaim, "must always come first, under a strong leader and under a great party".

These young activists look older than their elders. The more mature Tory members look their age, comfortable in their suits and tweeds. They have never worn anything else. The younger ones with their retro hairdos look like extras in a movie about the thirties. They dream of past British greatness. This is why Portillo appeals to them. He is one of them. Like them, he is trying to be something he is not, a Palmerston in an age of Little Chefs. The odd thing about Tory make-believe is that so many of the believers are nostalgic for a society from which they would have been excluded. The more ferocious Tory activists have accents that speak of housing estates, not public schools. If the radical fringe of Labour has often been toffs posing as proles, Tory radicals are likely to be proles pretending to be toffs.

But what was this "Britishness"? It is difficult to put a date on it. Victorian *laissez-faire* was one element, but the main area of nostalgia was the second world war. Here was

dominate us all, because "history is repeating itself". Even as the Eurosceptics were decrying defeatism and expressing their pride to be born British, the picture they painted of Britain was of a nation defeated, robbed of all independence, humiliated, unmanly. The unseen enemy was "Europe", with its tyrannical traditions, its "faceless bureaucrats", but the more one listened to the patriots, the more one realised that Europe was not the only point; the British traitors of the left were the real enemy. In a pamphlet, *Freedom Today*, one Professor Marsland explained that democracy, tolerance and honesty were "specifically British values", under attack by "the High Panjandrums of Hampstead and by the Thought Police at Guardian Headquarters". John Redwood said the same thing less colourfully. "It is no longer possible to be Labour and believe in British independence."

Absolute national independence — let alone control — does not exist anywhere. The real problem is sovereignty. In a world of international regulatory bodies, trade commissions, defence organisations and banks, it has become harder to tell who governs whom or what. This is frustrating. But the idea of Britain as a unique island of freedom, whose parliamentary traditions are so sacred that any political arrangement shared with other European countries would bring tyranny and revolution, is a romantic fantasy.

Charles Moore, looking impeccably British, offered the most sophisticated version of this fantasy. He spoke on *How To Be British*. Britishness, he said, was a political concept, a way of arranging a society ruled by law and governed by parliament, a beautiful family house, to be passed on from one generation to the next. Socialists wanted to smash the house. Europe would occupy it. Only Tories could be trusted to save it. Only Tories can truly be called British.

It is easy to make fun of this rhetoric and to laugh at the striped suits, but there is a

case to be answered. It is unsatisfactory that European laws and regulations are not openly debated by elected representatives. It is right to be fearful of a federation without democratic institutions. Any political arrangement arrived at without popular consent is dangerous. So I visited fringe meetings of the Europhiles too, in the hope of finding some trenchant answers to the Eurosceptic line.

The Europhiles tended to meet in the quiet elegance of the Lancastrian suite of the Imperial Hotel. Its pale walls and fake marble columns provided a very different atmosphere from the seedy cinemas where the Eurosceptics gathered. Drinks were served. Lord Plumb, MEP, spoke.

Edwina Currie looked resplendent. All was civility and light. And yet during the entire week I did not hear one good argument for a democratically governed European Union. I heard Edwina Currie say that "no man is an island" and that "we are not an island", and that it was "wonderful" to work with "our European friends".

And Lord Plumb, in a speech of exhorting tedium, told us that "Europe is our future", and spoke glowingly of trading advantages and of young backpackers enjoying "European cultural and romantic exchange".

I caught up with Edwina Currie at the Conservative booth in the Winter Gardens. She was festooned like a fine Belgian chocolate with a silk ribbon that said "Women for European Union". The Eurosceptics, she said, were "stupid". She refused to debate with John Red-

wood. And anyway an anti-European Tory party would never win an election. Maybe. But this was not good enough. Arguments of expediency alone cannot lay the fears of losing popular sovereignty at rest. And as long as those fears are there, the demagogues will turn Charles Moore's family house into a fortress embattled by European phantoms.

What the mood in a fortress Britain might be like could be seen at one fringe meeting, a celebration of the Britishness of British fish. British fishermen, like the miners before them, are having a hard time. Many are out of work. In a completely open market, they would have an even harder time, for they would have to

compete with richer, larger Spanish fleets. The European solution is to regulate competition through a common policy, sharing the seas, but with quotas to preserve stocks. No doubt some of these regulations are irritating, but they are not the reason fishermen are losing jobs.

But there they were, the distressed fishermen and their wives, in leather jackets, jumpers and jeans. Some had been drinking. There was a banner celebrating Nelson's victory over the French in 1805, but with a picture of the Spanish Armada. "Best both of them once more," it said. And there were the usual men in striped suits and tweeds, Sir Teddy Taylor, Chris Gill, MP, among them, whipping the crowd into a frenzy of Britishness.

Britons had to take control of British fish, Gill quoted Edmund Burke. The Spanish fishermen were compared to the Armada. Taylor remembered how British fishermen had been the greatest patriots during the war. Foreigners were blamed. The traitors in the British parliament who "betrayed" the fishermen were blamed. The "will of the British people" was invoked. "I'm not a European fisherman," said a Scot. "I'm a British fisherman."

As the politicians hollered and hooted, the fishermen grew restless. Shouts became more raucous, the drunkenness more unruly. Even as Chris Gill was beaming at the effect he was having, the men in tweed suits became visibly nervous. They tried to usher the drunken fishermen out of the room. "Look here," one said, "don't spoil it all." It was a glimpse, no more, of what might happen if the demagogues are not challenged. The distressed and unemployed might want to take them at their word, be British, get at the foreigners, take control, and spoil it all.

Ian Buruma's latest book is *The Wages Of Guilt* (Vintage, £3.99). He is currently working on a book about Anglophilia and Anglophobia.



The Tory uniform is an assertion of identity in a political party that has set itself up as the guardian of nationhood

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Mr Major dares but can he win?

THE 1995 Conservative Party conference must have loomed massively in John Major's mind as he contemplated his future last July and decided to put his party leadership on the line. Without his early resignation and subsequent re-election, there would have been no way of avoiding the Blackpool conference from being dominated by the leadership crisis. Every speech by every minister, every fringe meeting, every nod and wink on the platform, every burst of applause, every media story would have been saturated with leadership speculation. If Mr Major had not taken the initiative, then this morning's commentaries would all have been about whether his end of conference speech had done enough to save his besieged leadership when the inevitable vote came in November.

By that yardstick alone, Mr Major is entitled to a celebratory croissant with his breakfast coffee today. Who Dares Wins has been an ill-judged phrase on ill-suited lips at Blackpool this week, but it applies to Mr Major this Saturday morning, after a conference at which his leadership was barely questioned and following a conference speech which was

undoubtedly one of his best oratorical efforts, embodying a political confidence and an electoral strategy which would not have seemed possible at the start of the summer. Whatever you think of the Conservatives, you have to acknowledge that Mr Major has proved himself tactically right, at least for the moment.

And yet the predicament in which the Conservatives found themselves in July is still, to a large extent, the predicament they find themselves in this October. Mr Major won himself some time. But the weaknesses which beset him earlier this year are still besetting him now. The Conservatives still trail Labour by huge margins which are again increasing rather than decreasing. Mr Major is not a popular or trusted party leader or prime minister, while Tony Blair still retains his voter-friendly allure. The Conservatives' front-line policies for the coming year include many, like the Rail-track sell-off, which are deeply unpopular with their own core voters. The recovery is stalling. Unemployment remains high and concentrated in Tory areas. Inflation is edging up in a disturbing way.

The Blackpool conference finished well for Mr Major, but that should not blind him or anyone else to the fact that it was a troubled and troubling occasion. We were promised a government revived, bristling with new ideas, but what we got was only a prime minister revived, sporting a range of political initiatives which are designed more to embarrass Labour than to improve the country. In that sense, it was fundamentally an electioneering conference, as Mr

Major made clear in the very first paragraph of yesterday's electioneering speech, but most of the other ministerial efforts earlier in the week were either very lightweight indeed or else dangerously and provocatively divisive. Mr Major seems to have exercised a *droit de seigneur* this week to ensure that most of what his party was going to offer was concentrated in his own speech. The logic from his own point of view — as an unpopular leader ruthlessly trying to rebuild his position — was incontrovertible. But the fact remains that his continuing unpopularity may blunt and subvert the effect of much that he announced. It is not impossible, even now, that the party leadership may again be an issue in 12 months' time if the poll gap between the parties has not significantly narrowed. Much will depend upon the spring local elections and upon any intervening byelections.

There is no disputing that this week's conference and yesterday's speech were focused outwards against Labour rather than inwards upon internal party battles. The theme running through Mr Major's speech was the need to take the election battle to Mr Blair's party, not surprisingly in view of Labour's long sustained poll leads. Mr Major had no choice but to be upbeat about his own view of the world and his party's own prospects if he is to begin to chip away at that huge deficit over the winter — the precondition for a decent electoral performance in the local elections and, by extension, also the precondition for the prevention of any recurrence of the leadership question later in

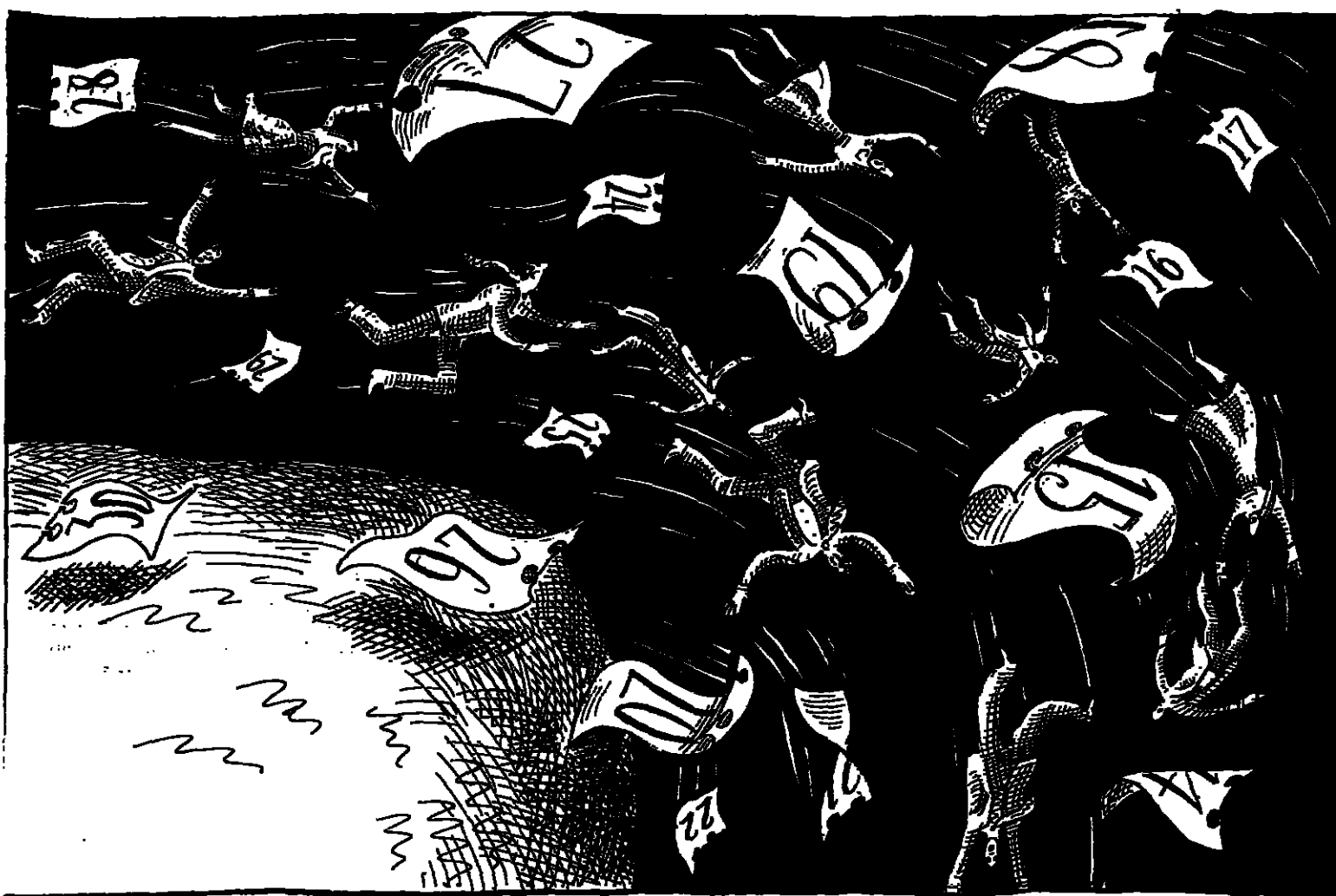
1996. Yet it was a difficult task, since it required him both to set out the differences between Conservative and Labour visions which to some eyes are increasingly blurred, and at the same time to pull his party back from the rightward lunge to which Michael Portillo and John Redwood would commit it.

The speech reflected this tension. It took some easy tricks, because politicians in power can do things that those in opposition cannot. Where Mr Blair called for 3,000 bobbies on the beat, Mr Major promptly announced another 5,000. Where Mr Blair had milked the V-Day mood for the spirit of 1945, Mr Major simply increased the pension to VC heroes. In some ways the speech was an attempt to re-assert an inclusive, harmonious, one-nation approach. The striking phrase "a wise and kindly way of life that is rooted in our history", for instance, was the very antithesis of Thatcherism. As was the remarkable and well-informed passage asking Conservatives to try to look at Europe from other points of view even though they might not agree with them. So, in spite of the fundamental antagonism to the devolution which Scots actually want, was the unspecified new suggestion that Mr Major is looking for a compromise fourth way in Scotland.

And yet the speech was also shot through with the counter-imperative of forcing or dragging Labour off the centre ground. This desire, which also lies behind Michael Howard's repressive penal agenda and Kenneth Clarke's phased tax cutting intentions, drives much of Mr Major's strategy. He is desperate to

manoeuvre Labour into opposing measures which his, and Mr Blair's, pollsters say are popular with uncommitted voters. Mr Blair, like Marshal Kutusov, thinks that by avoiding such an engagement he will be better able to survive the winter in good order. But that does not stop Mr Major from gambling that he can manage it somehow, whether over taxes, or law and order or, now, over the doubling of the assisted places scheme. For he is in no doubt that this is a purely political move, spending large amounts of government money to further divide the education system in the hope that Mr Blair will be compelled to oppose it and will thus open himself to the accusation — which the Conservatives have tried hard all week to make — that the Labour leader seeks educational opportunity for his own children but wants to deny it to others.

The final section of his speech posed four questions which will be at the heart of the Conservative general election campaign: "Will taxes be higher or lower under Labour? Would inflation be higher or lower under Labour? Would there be more or less choice under Labour? Would our defence be more secure under Labour?" The questions have only to be asked in order to be answered, claimed Mr Major. Most in the audience agreed with him, and cheered him more enthusiastically than they had cheered anyone else during a dull, uncertain week. But in truth that was the easy bit. Mr Major's real problem is that so many people now believe firmly that the answers to all these questions are the opposite ones to those that he would like.



All dazed and confused

MARTIN WOOLLACOTT asks why politicians are so reluctant to express uncertainty when faced with the anxieties of those they represent. Illustration by PETER TILL

WHEN the victors of Krajina drove through Zagreb after their easy campaign, some notes on the cobbled streets. Pathetic bus tickets for a political journey that the Serbs of the Croatian marches will never take, they fluttered about in the evening rush hour. I saw a girl pick a few up, and, as my eye caught hers, she let the notes fall. There was no triumph in her face, little curiosity, none of the glee that the honking horns of the racing vehicles wanted to evoke.

What was evident there instead, it seemed to me, was the most authentic reaction of the Yugoslav war, more common than anger or lust for revenge or even grief. This is a kind of fearful perplexity. Again and again, in those places, people express their wonderment at finding themselves in a play they do not understand and

whose cast they never applied to join. Everywhere in the zone of war, people point to objects that connect them to the zone of peace, to music tapes and football posters, paperback books and soft drinks, to T-shirts and sneakers. If these proofs of a world dedicated to peaceful consumption are so visible, how is it that there is war? How can they do it? How can it be believed? What happened to change things so? How did we become wolves? With such questions, in times of danger and upheaval, people mourn the loss of order.

The correspondent Philip Gibbs, writing during the early part of the first world war, remarked how the average Frenchman had been unable to imagine "the roses in his garden trampled down in mud and blood... while his own house came clattering down like a pack of cards — the family photographs, the children's toys, the piano

which he had bought on the hire system, all the household goods which he worshipped mixed up in a heap of ruins." Incomprehension may be the single most common feeling that most human beings have about existence. In war, ordinary folk admit to it, but less often in more "normal" times. But what is true of Yugoslavia in war, it can be argued, is also true of the rest of Europe in a less extreme but influential way. The insecurities which have crept up on us in recent years have culminated in a generalised sense of foreboding. Ten years ago, we feared the cataclysm of a nuclear exchange but otherwise felt we understood and accepted the story we were in.

Now the unemployed, the alienated immigrant and the worried native alike also feel themselves players in a drama in which they didn't plan to participate. This sense of being part of a story that could end badly is a marked characteristic of western societies. But while ordinary people may be ready to express their perplexity and anxiety at the movement of events, the elites do not do so.

Academics and journalists, trades of explanation, must always strive to assign cause and predict effect, even when, beside the picture of the dead child, the article on air power in foreign affairs can seem an obscenity. Yet as Professor Fred Halliday has recently pointed out, disciplines like international relations began as a response to perplexity and as an attempt to plumb the dismal mystery of war.

The perplexity of politicians is a more dangerous matter. All that we have seen in the last few years suggests that the professional politicians of both East and West are, with not enough honourable exceptions, worried and confused men and women who refuse to admit their uncertainties. Worse, they will

trade on certainties that they themselves do not feel in order to stay in power. In every country, the mixture which some of these wizards stir is the same. Something to do with the army, something to do with law and order, something to do with stopping outsiders getting in, something to do with not taking orders from foreigners. This is the eye of toad and wing of bat that leads to trouble.

The latest examples come to us from Blackpool, which should, perhaps, bring out a new rock with the word humbug printed through it. But whether it is Bob Dole making fun of Boudoir Boudoir's name, Jacques Chirac holding up the Schengen Agreement so as to appear tougher on immigrants, or Helmut Kohl getting slippery on the Deutschmark, there is evidence of the brew in most places. The two-faced nature of modern politicians, who spend half their

lives as international negotiators and the other half posturing at home is, nevertheless, not easily exposed.

The trick is to respond to insecurities you do not know how to deal with by a crafty juggling of quite inappropriate solutions to other kinds of insecurities that the citizen doesn't feel — or doesn't feel before you get to work on him. That citizen may feel his job is threatened, which you can't do anything about, but if you can get him to transfer his fear to something else, something, for example, against which the SAS might be able to defend him, you may be able to fix him on your side.

Indeed, high military spending combined with a marked reluctance to commit military forces is a clear indication of its symbolic nature. As is a heavy emphasis on punishment — so much more effective politically than crime prevention. Chucking these signifiers around has become politicians' daily business.

These are a few steps down a little lane that leads to the road Shostakovitch took. No western society and no other eastern society will go much further down it. Yet even a few steps can do so much damage. The Serbian leader showed how a long hoarded capital of co-operation can be squandered in a few months of foolishness. The Yugoslav political class took their country into war for little reason other than their desire to hold on to power and their inability to find any means of doing so that did not involve mobilising nationalist forces. Our politicians will not know how the past turned out. They can only claim to know how the future will turn out.

The present is always dangerous in a way that the past can never be, however fearsome the record, simply because, as historians frequently point out, the most important difference between the past and the present is that the past is known. The case for honest perplexity in the face of that worrying future is also a case for scaling down our pretensions, not trumpeting certainties we do not truly feel, and not claiming that there are always solutions to every malaise and difficulty.

When the Pope addressed the United Nations recently, he spoke of these matters. Man, he said, "approaches the future with a mixture of himself, fearful of what he might be capable of, fearful for the future." This was a call to confess perplexity and explore it. The presence that links politicians and poets — that they know absolutely what they are doing — needs to end. The reality is more ambiguous, and demands humility.

Papers which pave the way

Cities across Europe are now trying to emulate the success of the Big Issue. JOHN BIRD on streetwise mags

GENERAL elections are often fought over who is going to sort out the latest bogymen. Bullying miners in the 1974 election were replaced in 1979 by recalcitrant dustmen. While these working men are no longer seen as a grave danger to the continuation of British civilisation, the new threat comes from the beggars and winos.

Suddenly the street is the new arena in which to demonstrate political will. The major parties vie with each other over who is going to make the streets safe for us all. And taking a hard line on beggars and winos, as Jack Straw did recently, may tip the balance in the fight to grab that last bit of political advantage.

Contemporary street life, if it shows anything, shows that British society is becoming seriously unglued. And politicians grasp at political gain from attacking these latest bogymen because they know that somewhere out there is a real problem that the electorate is desperate to see resolved.

More than anything, the rumblings of politicians over the past few weeks about rescuing the streets demonstrates the importance to both parties of finding solutions. If they had courage rather than a commitment to a modern form of jingoism, they would admit their impotence. But that would be political suicide, and why tell the truth when it may cost you a few megaphones?

Wedged between the two major party conferences, a new international group was formed with the express purpose of looking for practical solutions to the problems of the street. Last weekend, in a news near Euston station, delegates gathered from many of Europe's major cities to form the international network of street papers.

With a combined sale of over two million copies each month, they are becoming big business. After the success of the Big Issue, most major European cities now have a paper that is sold on the

streets by homeless people. There were no rousing speeches at the conference about magic solutions, nor hyperbolic exaggerations of the power of homeless people selling papers; rather there was a strong sense of the need for them to pool resources, share expertise and refine the concept that lies behind their efforts.

Delegates from most European Union countries joined with Polish, Russian, Hungarian and South African representatives to create a charter of good practice. All papers must operate on a non-profit basis with surpluses poured into seeking new solutions to the problems of homelessness. This new group wants to make a noise about the appalling growth of homelessness throughout the world. And it wants to give homeless people a means of getting off the street through their own efforts, not by bribes or threats from government agencies.

Street papers straddle the gap between the public and the socially excluded, to use the latest Euro-term. It allows street people to become approachable; they are no longer the lurkers, the anonymous beggar with whom one has no relationship. In doing this, they have made them appear less threatening to the public.

The Big Issue was the first of Europe's street papers. Its initial concern was with finding a practical route by which homeless people could leave the streets. But street papers are only part of the solution.

The conference also debated the plight of The Depts, a paper sold in St Petersburg, where the circumstances are particularly dire. One night shelter with eight beds is run by The Dept's publisher, Noddy Ilychuk. Police harassment there is an everyday occurrence. The homeless do not have a stamp in their ID and without one they cannot use any social services. For the authorities they don't exist, except as a potential catch in the arrest quotas kept by the police. The delegates voted to help The Depts by adopting it as their cause for the year.

It is the emptiness and ugly sabre-rattling of the present street debate that contrasts with these attempts to find solutions. Street papers have brought people back from the edge. Political parties should be encouraging their efforts, not making their job more difficult.

John Bird is editor of the Big Issue

Smallweed



THERE was one good thing about Blackpool: the week brought low not one, but two, offensive young whippersnappers who, carried away by adulation, went hopelessly over the top and ended up being

sat on. One at least had some excuse: Justin Hinchcliffe, trailed at the start of the week as the hottest conference property since the young William Hague, is only 14. He overreached himself by gate-crashing a party, clutching Norma Major's arm, and telling her hubby to keep up the good work. He was doubly punished for that: he was never called up to speak, and even more cruelly he got told by Ted Heath to go to bed early and get back to school.

But the second preening attention-seeker has no such defence, since he's 42. Michael Portillo's performance underlines a neglected truth which Smallweed has noted before. He may be a clever fellow, but his judgment is hopelessly wonky. Remember the way he not only defended the poll tax but called it a great big voterwinner, just at the time it was costing his

party the Ribble Valley byelection? Remember the celebration party to mark his first 10 minutes, or something equally minimal, in the Commons? Remember the speech to Southampton students about the imperfections of Johnny Foreigner, for which he had to apologise? There are many bad things to be said about the Conservative and Chauvinist Party, but none more damning than this: it's a party that takes Miguel seriously. To see Major beaming fondly on him, as if on a protégé, while Portillo sicked up this stuff, was to wonder if Major's truly the decent cove people call him.

JOHN REDWOOD isn't quite in the clear either. One of the compensations for watching a conference on the box is the reaction shots. Simon Boggart noted the sublime enervation of Heseltine's clapping when Margaret Thatcher appeared on the scene. Yet compared to Commissioner Brittan, his fellow-Westland victim, Hezza looked like Evelyn Glennie. Imagine a man gingerly tapping a broken finger just to ensure there is still a trickle of life in it: that was Brittan. What curmudgeonly stuff! On the eve of Her Majesty's 70th birthday, too! Why, the BBC yesterday opened up Radio 4 not with the usual mélange of Men of Harlech, Loch Lomond and, but with the National Anthem. The first good thing the Corporation had done in a decade, early-bird Tories were no doubt telling themselves. They'll be sorry to hear that the BBC is putting it down to a technical error by a bleary early morning studio manager.

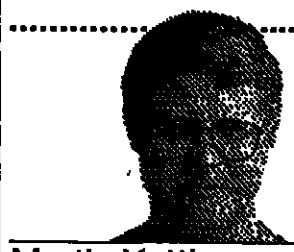
What the BBC can't, unfortunately, tell us is what Redwood said when a speaker on the rostrum asked the hall if John Major was the right man to lead the party into the next election. The cameras caught his erstwhile challenger's mouth opening and shutting, as if he were gulping for air. It could have been "Yes". It looked to Smallweed a snide snigger more like "No". Perhaps it was "cripes"; it was rather too short for "for lummees". Apparently the producers kept playing it back but didn't in the end repeat it on air because they couldn't be entirely sure one way or the other.

IN THE CONTEXT of Blackpool, Smallweed added last week to the mighty Wurlitzer. Some readers who weren't around in those days may have been wondering what Wurlitzers were, assuming perhaps from the sound of them that the Germans used to fire them during the second world war. Not at all. They were cinema organs which used to soar up into the auditorium at a break in the programme, with the organist already playing. They were usually played, for some reason, by men called Reginald: Reginald Dixon (in Blackpool Tower), Reginald Foort, Reginald Porter-Brown, etc. I had always assumed that the mighty machine was ordered up from some managerial control box and ordered down at the end by the same agency. But Smallweed's friend Dan says this isn't so. He was present at the Mayfair Cinema. Footing, when an organist whizzed up playing with a bravura which soon signalled that he was extremely drunk. And continued to play, long after the film was due to have started, defying every attempt to ground him.

TO UNDERSTAND why Gillian Shephard turned to ITN, not the BBC, for her commissar of plain understandable English, you have only to turn to John Bird's response, fetchingly titled Britain's Digital Opportunity, to the Government's plans for digital television. In this he calls on ministers to "create an open digital environment guaranteeing service providers access to conditional access and subscriber management services on all digital delivery systems on fair and reasonable terms." Try singing it to the tune of Sall Away.

THE DEPARTURE of Roland Wales, the former Bank of England director, is bad enough, but Smallweed hears of an even more grievous casualty. David Gardner, their local government officer, who is recognised on both sides as the man chiefly responsible for Labour doing so well and the Tories doing so badly in the recent review of parliamentary constituencies, is on his way too.

RUSSELL OSMAN, sacked as Bristol City manager, is suing for wrongful dismissal on the grounds that the club has fared no better under the man who replaced him. There's a precedent here to make boardrooms tremble. If Osman wins, won't the victims of boardroom coups, not to mention editorial changes at the Sunday Express, follow suit? Here is a project to entertain Margaret Thatcher in her declining years. All right, John Major won the election of 1992; but since then he and his party have plumbed electoral depths quite unknown in her day.



THE Conservative Party conference is now, with the Budget, the most important event in the British political calendar. This week at Blackpool has been no exception to this new law of contemporary politics. What is more, the Tory conference now not only sets much of the Conservative Party agenda; it even begins to set some of the Labour Party agenda as well.

It was not always thus. Throughout its history the Conservative conference has been generally denigrated. But in the 1970s, when it was felt that he would rather seek the advice of his valet than of his party conference. Nowadays it is still routinely written off as a stage management festival, controlled by a few members of the party's leaders, attended by undemanding simpletons of instinctive views and, in the wider scheme of things, an event of much less significance to British politics than the apparently more influential I and F conferences.

Yet the recent reality is of a far from ineffectual body. Perceptive political observers like Richard Kelly² have begun to treat the Tory conference with much more respect than it has hitherto enjoyed. He stresses that the October week by the seaside can seriously

Nor is it true to claim that the conference floor is always quiescent. Nothing is normally more anodyne than a Conservative preference motion, or more predictable than the unanimous vote in its favour. Yet revolts occur nevertheless. The law and order motion was voted down in 1981. The 1987 conference forced Ridley to abandon the phasing-in of the poll tax. And the 1989 conference overturned the party leadership over Northern Ireland.

At the same time the Tory conference fringe has become much more important. In the early 1980s, ministers like Peter Walker and Francis Pym would use fringe events to ease themselves of heavily coded but unmistakably critical thoughts about the Thatcherite project. When Michael Heseltine left the government in 1986 his annual fringe event was the focus of oppositional thought. And over the past 10 years it has become commonplace for almost every cabinet minister to make not just his own departmental address in the conference hall, but to deliver a *tour d'horizon* on the fringe.

Under John Major these trends have all continued. This year, ministers like Dorell, Waldegrave, Lang and Howard all made important fringe speeches, as did Leon Brittan and the ubiquitous John Redwood. Inside the hall the myth of seamless stage management took another dent when the platform suffered a little-noticed defeat, when delegates voted to abolish rate-capping (they think that this will flush out Labour high spenders and thus drive voters towards the Tories). Compare that with Labour's defeat-free week in Brighton

BUT the most important new feature of the Conservative conference was the role it now plays in arbitrating presidential power struggles. Michael Portillo's speech cannot be properly understood save in a party context. It was, as Redwood remarked, rabble-rousing, but it was also rabble-rousing because Portillo knows that the post-Thatcher party is responsive to his nationalistic rhetoric and that Major is not a strong enough leader to silence him.

However, even Portillo's shameless use of the conference is less significant than the use made of it by Kenneth Clarke, John Major and, in particular this week, by Michael Howard. Howard's speech confirms a trend

change. Where previous home secretaries such as Whitelaw, Hurd and Clarke treated the conference as an occasion to be survived — rather as Patrick Mayhew now treats the annual Northern Ireland debate — Howard, building on the tradition of Brittan and Baker, treats it as one to be gratified. Hurd tried to throw the conference dogs off the scent; Howard throws them red meat.

This is partly because, as an instinctive political opportunist, Howard responds to the conference by concession and compromise, a political finesse. But it is also because he knows that Mr. Clarke are all engaged in an attempt to force Labour's hand. Major did it yesterday with his pledge to double the defence budget. If this promise is an incitement to Labour to oppose it, so that the Conservatives can then denounce Tony Blair as a hypocrite over educational opportunity, then Mr. Clarke, who always calls himself the political Chancellor, using his speech this week to trail his aim, long anticipated by Labour, of putting Blair on the spot with a phased tax-cutting strategy for the coming Budget, is right. Clarke's belief is that who dares to win loses.

But Howard is also a political Home Secretary. Everything that he has ever done has been aimed exclusively at trying to force Labour to oppose his measures, so that he can then denounce the opposition as soft on crime. This was his approach when Blair was shadow home secretary and it is still his approach now that Blair is Labour leader. Thursday's speech underlined that there is no length to which Howard will not go in order to try to lure Labour into outright opposition. His

speech had nothing to do with penal policy and everything to do with political imperatives. Public opinion, according to every poll, enthuses about tougher sentences and lower taxes. Labour, ever mindful of its electoral base, has to tell voters on whom it relies share these instincts to the hilt, must therefore make up its mind. Only a fool would say that the choice is easy. But it all suggests that the Conservative Government, whose Thatcherite instincts are more than two ministers to drive their party's agenda to the right, may also now be helping to shape Labour policy too. That is something of which no one could accuse Labour's own conference.

Anthony Seldon, a Conservative MP, edited by Anthony Seldon and Stuart Bell (OUP, 1994).

white dismay and black joy that greeted last week's acquittal. "I would not dare say that it cannot be reconciled, but do we have the time, given the deteriorating condition of America, economically, politically and morally? Look at how degenerate it's becoming. Can white folk get along well with black folk who are in this condition?"

This is the kind of talk you usually hear only from the Ku Klux Klan. Yet the media handle him delicately, even deferentially. The Washington Post once had a major internal row over whether his views could be described as "controversial."

People are wary because Minister Farrakhan cannot be written off as some racist demagogue on the fringes. Instead, he is a racist demagogue at the heart of black American life.

Until just a couple of years ago, mainstream black leaders ostracised him. In 1994, Benjamin Chavis, the former head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the nation's premier civil rights organisation, lost his job, partly because of his links to Farrakhan. Now the black establishment recognises his following is so great, especially among alienated youth, that they can afford to shun him no longer.

Jesse Jackson — once America's foremost black leader — will march behind Farrakhan on Monday, along with black Congressmen. Tellingly, Chavis, the sacked NAACP leader, now works as an assistant to Farrakhan.

The Minister has not moderated his message or gone mainstream. The mainstream has come to him. O.J. Simpson's lawyer, Johnnie Cochran, felt no shame about using Nation heavies — the so-called Fruit of Islam — as a personal bodyguard during the trial. Last year rappers Public Enemy released *White Man's Heaven Is A Black Man's Hell*, a hymn of Nation-style separatism. The song's title came from a fifties hit by a cabaret singer called Calypso Gene, who went on to become Louis Farrakhan.

It is significant that the last mass black march on Washington was in 1963, when Martin Luther King told of his "dream" of an integrated America. That dream seems like a delusion in the wake of the riots and the violence which mark real life. Even if Monday's rally draws a quarter of its target figure, it will still confirm the arrival of a new leader for black America—a champion of separation. Farrakhan is not bothered that his message is reviled by so many, for he believes he is in good company. "When Moses came, Moses wasn't liked. Jesus wasn't liked. Muhammad wasn't liked. Prophets weren't liked. But eventually people came to like the message—and love the messenger."

A juicy tale, just lightly poached

the agent from "soliciting or enticing" his former clients. Gordon, who is normally the most talkative of men, is currently holed up in his Georgian home in Edinburgh, refusing to come to the phone. "He's says he knows you and you're a very nice chap. But he can't speak to you," his wife said yesterday.

EVERYBODY knows that the once-gentle world of publishing has become a meat market populated by greedy authors and former widget salesmen who read Martin Amis's *Money* and thought John Self was a terrific role model. Only the literary agent remained a bulwark against vulgarity, selflessly nurturing young talent and playing by the rules. That is until Andrew Wylie came along.

Wylie, a living cliché—the “brash American”—had one word for the old regime—“Bullshit!”—and rampaged across literary London, snapping up other agents’ authors.

In one famous raid, he poached Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri and Bruce Chatwin from Deborah Rogers. Recently, he enticed Martin Amis away from Pat Kavanagh with the promise he’d secure a \$500,000 advance for the novel, *The Information*. He did. “All I want is for people who write well to make a living wage—you know, like a bricklayer: that much money,” he once said.

“The rules? I tend to positively put them out of my mind.”

Gordon: agent under fire



Amis: one who went

The rule Wylie most probably had in mind is number 6 a) in the Association of Authors' Agency's Code of Ethics. Number 6 shall knowingly represent an author who is a client of another agency, without the agreement of such agency. Failure to enquire as to an author's agency relationship shall be considered negligence."

Some agents regard this as a violation of the literary universe. Others have followed Wylie in openly ignoring it. Many pay it lip-service, but quietly circumvent it when required. "The rule is you just shouldn't poach other agents' authors, but everyone knows that's not going to happen," the agent said yesterday. "Let's say you really love an author. You would write them a letter, not even acknowledging the

ready that you know they already have an agent—that way, you can tell them to go away and ask them to get in touch. Poaching is the great unmentionable."

The great unmentionable will get mentioned a lot after next Friday, when the bizarre case of the literary agent Gilles Gordon versus his former employees, Shell Land, comes to court in London.

Gordon, whose list of authors includes Fay Weldon, Prince Charles, Sue Townsend and Wilfrid Brimley, left Shell Land early this year to set up an office in Edinburgh for another agency, Curtis Brown.

But the case, which has indicated they wanted to move with him, Shell Land, faced with the prospect of losing the most lucrative list of writers in the land, responded by getting a court order preventing

Literary opinion is divided on the merits of the case but it is agreed that the debate about the ethics of the agent. David Godwin, a former publisher who became an agent two years ago, believes it's time to end the charade of agenting as a cosy and English language game.

"It's an intensely competitive business, no matter what anyone tells you. I have been rebuked for poaching by people in the association who, two or three months ago, had been telling me to go to agents trying to poach them—that's fair game, as far as I'm concerned. My job is to get the best deal I can for my agents and represent their interests, and I don't see why the rules of a club which is trying to contain the activities of its members."

Godwin's views have made him a virtual outcast, but there is some support within the establishment for his argument that modern agents have to be ruthless — there is a lot of money to be made these days in an ever-expanding market, not only in books but also film, TV and CD-ROM.

Car Lederger, a stalwart of the Agents' Association, acknowledges that the industry is in a bit of a lull. "There is still a place for movies (a). "Agents are taking on more editorial responsibilities, but at the same time they've also got to be hitmen in an increasingly competitive world," she says.

Authors are demanding more. "They want a professional agent who'll bring them some serious luck. Under those circumstances it's hardly surprising the old rules are under pressure."

After all, there is that story in literary circles about two famous authors discussing the possibility of a quiet drink. "My agent is complete asshole," says one. "Oh," his friend replies, "Isn't that the best part of the job? To have doing the deal for you?"

E SPEAKS, and a million black men stop and listen. It is a surprise, his voice is softer, gentler than you expected. He may be America's leading racist, an anti-white, anti-semitic, neo-Nazi, but he sounds like an angel.

In the course of a rare and exclusive interview, the head of the Nation of Islam showed the oratory, charm and political acuity which have made him the pre-eminent leader of black America, and why he has white Americans running scared. On Monday he'll show his might again, when black men heed his summons and converge on Washington for the largest black rally since the glory days of the civil rights era.

He's calling it the Million Man March, but the men will not walk anywhere. Instead, they will fill the National Mall in Washington, all the way to the steps of the US Congress. There they will demonstrate their muscle, showing the politicians that the dismantling of the welfare state and the roll-back of federal protection will have no effect. Black men will be pushed around.

To Louis Farrakhan, who has asked women to observe the day by staying at home, it is obvious why it is the men who have to march. "The endangered species among us are black men," the 61-year-old says, like a grandfather to a good, but simple child. "If you look at the black male, at the farthest conflict that exists in our community, at the jails filled with men -- we are in bad, bad shape."

"If 68 per cent of the homes in the black community are headed by a woman and there

get these children by osmosis: a male was involved. But the male is not involved in the teaching and mentoring of that child." That's why Farrahkan has billed Monday as a day of Atonement. "We have failed in our responsibility to our women and children."

The numbers support Farrahkan's case. There are, indeed, more black men behind bars than at college. Drugs and violence have become a way of life. A black man is eight times more likely to be murdered than a white, and a study last week came to this staggering conclusion: one in three black men in their twenties is on the wrong side of the law, either in prison or on probation.

The hype over angry white males has obscured this crisis of the black American male, and Farrahkan hopes to redress that on Monday. But he is not interested merely in diagnosing the disease. He has a cure, too.

He preaches an ultra-conservative message of self-reliance, urging blacks to "do it for ourselves" and "be the best" by emulating the success of the white Republicans, he wants African-Americans off welfare and in business. The clean-cut young men of the Nation of Islam, in their suits and trademark bow-ties, look the model of enhanced black self-esteem — the way white conservatives want blacks to be. Yet their leader is reviled.

The reason is not mysterious: Louis Farrakhan is a Jew-baiter. If not an outright racist. He is the heir of the Nation's tradition — once personified by Malcolm X — of black separatism, if not outright supremacism.

He has called whites "devils" and Judaism a "dirty" or "suttier" religion than Christianity. He has called them "Murrans and

lyng comes easy for white people. "Ten years earlier, in a remark that has haunted him since, he said, "The Jews don't like Farrakhan, so they call me Kitzler. Well, that's a good thing, because I'm a very great man." Later he explained that he meant "wickedly great".

Even so, Louis Farrakhan is adamant. "I'm not a racist at all," he told the Guardian. "I have done nothing to hurt anyone. If I say a hurtful word, I was sponsored by white people, why say I'm anti-white? Why not say white folks are anti-black?"

What about his comments that Jews funded the slave trade and backed Hitler, both of which have been proven true? Nazi right? "The question is, is it the truth? If a Jew or Jewess financed Hitler, that's not from me, that's from what I'm reading. If that's true, why call me anti-Semitic?"

"There is no black person found desecrating a synagogue, or going to a Jewish cemetery — where do you find that activity? Among whites." The 45-year-old, 1.8m-tall lieutenant, Khalil Abdul Muhammad, who once offered a cheering Nation crowd a description of their real enemy. "It's that old no-good Jew, that old impostor Jew, that old hook-nose, bagel-eating, lox-eating, Johnny-come-lately, perpetrating a fraud, just crawled out of the caves and hills of Europe, so-called damns Jew, and he dismissed Muhammed, but not before praising the "truths" he had spoken.

"That man spoke much truth," Farrakhan says now. "But the characterisation . . . no Jewish person has more control over the shape of the world than no other. I pug nose, thick lips or kinky hair

hair." As for the Hitler comment, Farrakhan understands that "Jews were hurt by that," but says his words were distorted by the media.

There is a context for Farrakhan's speech. It is his belief in racial separatism. This gets little attention in white America, yet it is the Nation's defining credo, spelled out in every edition of the Nation's weekly final Call. Under the headline: What The Muslims Want, it demands that the descendants of slaves "be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own — either on this continent or elsewhere . . . We believe that interracial marriage or race-mixing should be prohibited."

Louis Farrakhan explains that blacks and whites are "like two people who can't live together. Divorce is the last step if the two parties are irreconcilable." He imagines both sides dividing up assets and agreeing alimony. He says he would seek, "just compensation for white people given slaves for blood, sweat and the toil of slave labour."

Louis Farrakhan acknowledges that it is not a "reality" to hope blacks will some day gain a separate chunk of the US — although he does think it's "nice as a concept."

Instead, he would like US financial aid to help black Americans "carve out a place on the African continent," says a strategy document by Kenneth Powell, but Farrakhan prefers the Jewish model, imagining a black connection with some future African-American state.

This is not a complete pipe-dream. "The OJ Simpson verdict showed how wide the chasm is between the two perceptions," says Farrakhan, referring to the

16 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Truth and the Portillo wars

THE most charitable explanation of Michael Portillo's extraordinary speech at Blackpool is that of John Redwood: it was intended to rouse the noble rather than provide a clear statement of government policy. But senior ministers have a duty to educate their rabble as well as to raise them.

As Lord Curzon and Sir Michael Portillo have pointed out (Letters, October 12), Britain has been part of an integrated alliance-structure with its headquarters in Brussels for nearly half a century, during which time our troops have served under a range of foreign commanders. Today, orders to British troops in Bosnia will come from Brussels, and those orders may require them to "lay down their lives". It is hardly a good moment for a British Secretary of State for Defence to cast doubt on the legitimacy of that operation.

Hopefully, Mr Portillo has done his own research and that of his party more harm than he has to his country, but it would be a good idea if he could limit the damage by telling us exactly what he did mean.

Sir Michael Howard, Emeritus Professor of Modern History, Oxford University, The Old Farm, Eastbury, Hungerford, Berks RG17 7JN.

LISTENING to Michael Portillo I was surprised to learn that he was a minister of the crown who seems to believe that the European Court of Human Rights is part of the European Union.

Dennis Christian, 87 Swanscombe Road, London W4 2HL.

Faith in the shining city on a hill

THE problems Michael Simmons identifies in his article on the politics of community care and the Church Urban Fund (October 11) are vital but not necessarily terminal.

Faith in the City woke up many of us to what we should have known and either didn't or preferred not to know. It has been a shock to find that there are areas of such urban deprivation even here in Kent. We were invited to raise money for the Church Urban Fund. Charity? Patronising? Any whiff of either disappeared as we met the people in the projects and were privileged to contribute just something to the partnership. That

experience is not just to be put back in the box. This city, we've been shown, is what we have made it: its defects are ours, whether we live there or in the leafier parts of Kent, or even in this cathedral precinct. Some of us will go on remembering that, and want still to stand by those who are working there in a continuing partnership.

What's more, we've heard rumours of another city and some clues as to what it would be like. We know that to make our city like that one means more than small change. Michael Tili, Archdeacon of Canterbury, 29 The Precincts, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2EP.

THE Home Secretary's ideas confirm that he has cheapened this country's approach to criminal policy to a degree which would have been unimaginable until very recently. He has replaced a traditional reflective rationality with the crude view of policy as a commodity to be traded for party purposes.

Prof Andrew Rutherford, Chair, the Howard League, 708 Holloway Road, London N19 5NL.

IF THE Conservative Party is so keen to stamp out truancy, and Justin Hinchcliffe is so keen on improving standards in education, why wasn't he in school? D W Reid, 36a Roseberry Road, London N10.



Love that nearly speaks its name

AS a very happily married man with two children, having nonetheless always known that I was sexually attracted equally to men, I found Andrew Sullivan's analysis (October 12) deeply satisfying. For 30 years I have suppressed my homosexual feelings but have recently experienced sexual love with a man for the first time: I do not feel that I have suddenly turned from being an upright citizen, married with kids, into a dirty marginalised pervert.

Sullivan's clinical dissection of the conservative and liberal stances on homosexuality are exactly my own view of the complexities of the sexual "rainbow". Just as, in a rainbow, it is almost impossible to determine when red shades off into orange, orange into yellow and so on, the orientation of desire, attraction and love know few confines. It is precisely the endless reductive generalisations and simplifications of both straight and gay press which Sullivan so minutely and satisfyingly rejects, that makes his articles, and one assumes, his book, so exceptional. It is a sad commentary, though, that even in as liberal an organisation as the BBC, for which I have worked for over 20 years, I am advised by close colleagues that to declare my attraction towards members of my own sex, of which I am neither ashamed nor, now, unwilling to discuss, would be professional suicide. Name & address withheld.

I HAVE come each day to Andrew Sullivan awaiting some new or interesting observation on sexual politics. So far I have been told that "homosexuals" face hostility and prejudice (a point which I think may have been made already); that Foucault has no clear vision of a better society (the least interesting of the accusations levelled at Foucault by readers who don't understand his political agenda); that positive discrimination can increase the hostility of the prejudiced (an argument that seems to have dragged on since the sixties); and that, in Sullivan's breathtakingly unoriginal conclusion, "homosexuals" would be happier if treated with respect and dignity — astounding!

Given the volume of intelligent and innovative scholarship (Jeffrey Weeks, David Bell, Tamsin Wilson) and journalism (Bee Campbell, Mark Simpson) that the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities are producing, to give coverage of these debates into the hands of someone with nothing new to say seems nothing less than insulting. To then call it "probably the most important book about homosexuality ever published" implies that, as ever, the mainstream British press turns its information on sexuality to the public machines of publishers, and ignores the energetic discussions of our living communities. Jo Eadie, Kembel Court, Downhead Park, Milton Keynes, MK15 9AX.

ANDREW Sullivan's thought-provoking piece inspires the following observations: inherent contradiction number one. What does the writer mean? "Looking back I had no deep emotional ties to girls" and "they were sometimes soul mates." A soul mate implies some form of emotional bond. Poor choice of language. Using a euphemism which relies on recognition of a sign rather than any deep sympathy for the English language. Say instead "they were occasional confidantes, but nothing more."

Inherent contradiction number two. At the end of the same paragraph the writer says that he really did not want to spend much time with girls. This all fits in the face of "they were friends" and "I have always enjoyed the friendship of women." I know it is part of the writer's armoury not to alienate 50 per cent of his readership, but a little honesty would come as a refreshing change. Say "I have never enjoyed women's company. Occasionally, I meet some with whom I can communicate on a friendly basis, but they can never touch me in the ways that a man can." Inherent contradiction number three. It is no obvious sign of incipient homosexuality that he would rather spend his teenage and boyhood years in the company of other young males. Even rabid heterosexuals will have followed this pattern of behaviour. They will also spend more of

their adult lives in the company of men than even the most blatant of drama queens. John Bennett, Highgate High Street, London N6 5JT.

WOULD the Guardian please deal with its cringing mock-liberalism on the subject of homosexuality? Andrew Sullivan's book is intelligent and fairly well thought through. But the political agenda it advances is neither as new nor as radical as he or your paper hopes. Neither am I terribly clear why a book written by an Anglo-American for the US market should be offered up as the "gay political agenda" for this country. The hype reveals more about the Guardian's views on what makes a good homosexual than it does on the quality of Sullivan's thoughts. Chris Woods, Bonington Square, London SW6 1TE.

I HAVE long suspected that your paper is a house journal for homosexuals. After this week's articles and offensive pictures, I am sure that, like Channel 4 and BBC2 and soap operas, you are determined to establish that 2.5 per cent of the population who call themselves "gay" are not deviants but normal. I am sure you will never be in touch with this. Can the Gay Guardian let's have a more normal, balanced paper. Peter J Thompson, Fairpark Terrace, Boness, EH51 0NE, Scotland.

A radio station out of tune with its audience

AM I alone in seeing the activities of Nicholas Kenyon, controller of Radio 3, as but a microcosm of the effect of the current level of debate on the future of public service broadcasting, where the Government will guarantee the BBC charter for 10 years but the licence fee for only five, and the size of the audience the only criteria of success? Ian Gordon, 16 Bayle Court, The Bayle, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1SN.

RADIO 3 has never been safe in Nicholas Kenyon's hands. Almost his first action was the dismissal of the most distinguished presenters, a clear indicator of what was to come. Whose agenda is he serving? Perhaps a BBC which wishes to destroy a network which does not offer "value for money" in market terms. Joan Darwent, 36 Westfield Road, Sheffield S18 6YE.

GERALD Kaufman (October 13) is quite right about Radio 3's descent into banality. I work from home and have been a faithful listener to the Third Programme/Radio 3 from the start. I welcomed the gradual inclusion of erudite jazz programmes and explorations of popular and serious music from other cultures, but now, with information increasingly being replaced with babble, and revelation giving way to repetition, I find I am listening less and less. Only the Proms continue to provide a planned mix of familiar and new.

Classic FM has absorbed the listener who requires easy entertainment from serious music, so why does Radio 3 have to be a clone? Peter Shield, 20 Wilberby Road, Nottingham NG5 4PB.

SYMPATHISE with Raymond Gubbay's need to promote his Bohème at the Royal Albert Hall (October 11) but he should not do so by throwing stones at Covent Garden. The range of ticket offers available for our performances this autumn is immense. It includes Prom tickets at £11, Saturday Special prices from £1 to £9, and an innovative new series of operas with a range of prices from £3 to £85. We care about making our performances good value. Our staff are hard-working, productive and by no means overpaid, and to suggest otherwise is mischievous calumny. Nicholas Payne, Director, The Royal Opera, London WC2E 9DD.

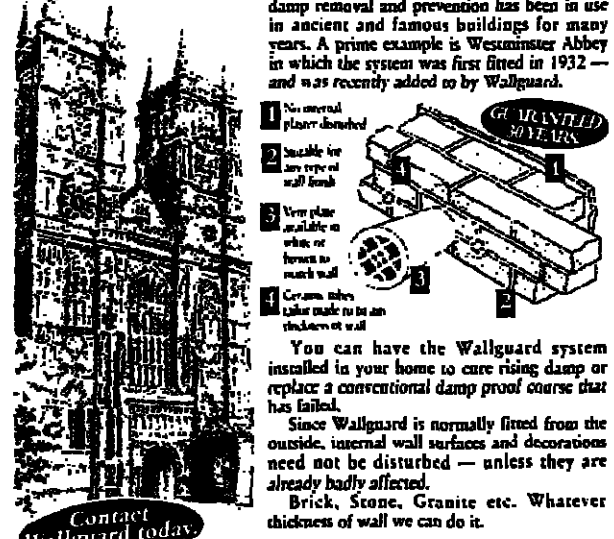
YOU suggest that Scottish Opera "was an obvious candidate for cuts" (October 7). This implies that the Scottish Arts Council is going to withdraw funds. The situation is more subtle, though no less painful. We are unable to grant the company the increase it has requested because of the equally pressing claims of other areas of arts activity.

The Scottish Office, has instructed us to plan on a cash shortfall for the next three years. If inflation remains in the region of 3 per cent per annum, this means that by 1999 the arts in Scotland will have received a cut of over £2.2 million in real terms. Our treatment of Scottish Opera has been no different to that of all our clients. Matthew Kookke, Music Director, Scottish Arts Council, 12 Manor Place, Edinburgh EH3 7DD.

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Wot's what

I HAVE never understood why so many writers, and now you (Letters, October 12), try to depict uneducated speech by writing "wot" as "wot". According to my pronunciation dictionary, "wot" is pronounced "wot", and so "wot" is absolutely standard pronunciation, with no one could object. If I am not to pronounce what as wot, wot should be pronounced as wot. Steve Toft, 58c rue Brisée, B-7034 Obourg, Belgium.

HOPE Trevor McDonald will consider the devastation wrought on our language by "shall" and "should" having been ousted in favour of "will" and "would". It is now nearly two years since I noticed its disappearance, and the most adaptable and expressive language in the world is thereby diminished. Clare Smith, 29 Church Path, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7DP.

DON'T know what Trevor McDonald's politics are, and I don't care, but it strikes me that his presence is a desperate attempt by the Tories to attract some popularity by linking themselves with that nice man who reads the news. Why not appoint a professor of linguistics who knows something technical about the subject? Because nobody would have heard of him, that's why. I know that Trevor McDonald's well-spoken, but so's my brother, and nobody's appointed him to a quango. Ian Payne, Peabody Avenue, London SW14 4AX.

Abortive dances with Wolf

WHY does the Guardian write itself with abortion only when prompted by famous people such as Naomi Wolf (Crying Wolf, October 10)? Of the 500 or so women having abortion this week, only a handful will have heard of her. Yet the problem endures — next week another 500, despite continuing advances in the provision of effective, user-friendly contraception. No doubt the virtual absence of decent research on the subject helps prolong the silence. And a supine public is increasingly open to accepting US-type solutions wrought on our language by "shall" and "should" having been ousted in favour of "will" and "would". It is now nearly two years since I noticed its disappearance, and the most adaptable and expressive language in the world is thereby diminished. Clare Smith, 29 Church Path, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7DP.

YOUR editorial lambasts Naomi Wolf for changing her mind about abortion in the light of her experience of pregnancy. It seems that a truism is only "a self-evident or indisputable truth" (Concise Oxford Dictionary) as long as it does not conflict with Guardian orthodoxy — thus the notion that "the personal is political" must now be thrown out, along with both baby and bathwater.

Naomi Wolf is honest enough to proclaim her about-turn, just as members of the armed forces have become pacifists after experiencing war, and recently a prominent former executioner in the US declared his opposition to the

death penalty. I cannot help feeling that if Ms Wolf's U-turn had been the other way around, she would be eulogised. Debby Wakeham, Cobden Street, Luton, Beds LU2 0NG.

NAOMI Wolf is very brave to speak out against abortion when any feminist who dares to oppose abortion is treated as a heretic and shouted down for it. Believe it or not, feminists who dissent on the issue of abortion do exist and why can't we have a voice and express our views? The pro-choice movement is allowed full use of the media; yet pro-lifers are gagged or labelled misogynists, religious bigots and right wing. Ali Browning, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge HX7 5BJ.

ANGELA Neustatter (Howling Wolf, October 10) regards abortion as essential to feminism for preserving "autonomy". Why? Are we still living in a society where you can't be autonomous and pregnant? Diana E Forrest, Hollins Road, Todmorden OL14 6QV.

I WISH to enlighten Zoe Fairbairns (Letters, October 12) as to why I attack feminism. A sexist ideology which excludes every British couple we could find. We circulated letters among adopting couples, and asked agency representatives and lawyers to help us find couples for interview. In the UK we approached four couples who had adopted and asked at least six adoption lawyers to appear and/or put us in touch with birth mothers who were voluntarily giving up their babies for adoption. They failed to do either. Jan Rocha, R Professor João Arruda 200, San Paulo, Brazil.

Bull and babes

FOLLOWING publication of my letter on bull bait (October 9), I am horrified to find myself the recipient of daily sacks of hate mail and threats as in "I should come round and smash your children's faces in" or "You are a stupid, ignorant cow who thinks fashion is more important than safety".

To the morons who write nasty anonymous letters, I would like to say — you came close to making me leave the bars on just to prove that I am not easily threatened. To all the sensible people who kindly did as I asked — the appointment at the garage is made. You convinced me by your reasoned arguments for road safety. Jenny Morgan, Address withheld.

IN RESPONSE to Liv O'Hanlon, of the Campaign for Inter-Country Adoption (October 11), we tried desperately to get British couples to give us interviews for the BBC Assignment programme, and were consistently rebuffed. During four weeks in Paraguay we approached every British couple we could find. We circulated letters among adopting couples, and asked agency representatives and lawyers to help us find couples for interview.

In the UK we approached four couples who had adopted and asked at least six adoption lawyers to appear and/or put us in touch with birth mothers who were voluntarily giving up their babies for adoption. They failed to do either. Jan Rocha, R Professor João Arruda 200, San Paulo, Brazil.

A Country Diary

ANGLESEY: THE grey-cloud morning evolved into a perfect afternoon: small cumulus islands, piled high on the autumn sky, crossed over the lumpy ocean. The beach huts are locked up, their owners gone home. We have all this coast to ourselves. There's no path along the northernmost east coast, beyond Dulas Bay, but the tide was out as we scrambled across the great, tilted rocks, pink, brown, yellow against the lapping water. Far out a super tanker rode quietly at anchor under those towering cloud-isles, a white-sailed yacht slipped by. Beyond Penrhyn Glas a tiny sheep path allowed a traverse quite high above the rocks, a situation with all the magic of similar, unfrequented Hebridean island routes. Then we came down to the beach of Porthgwynia, our only conformation increasing along the high-tide line, where luscious, black fruit still hung from trailing brambles. Uprumped pebbles rattled as they went along.

just about the only sound to echo round the little bay; then we turned the corner and were out of earshot. A climb through bracken then a descent through a desperate tangle of sloe, dog rose and more bracken, where a singing trickle comes down from Mynydd Eilian to empty into Freshwater Bay. There was a blue boat pottering about down there, and a picnic party on the rocks. Far off to the east those piled clouds had the orange-beige hint of smoke on their undersides, common atmospheric feature of April and autumn skies. Soon the bright, white block of Point Lynas lighthouse came in sight ahead, at the end of the peninsula. The path to Point Lynas was still dog-fringed with the last buttery blooms of common fleabane and, as we went along, Welsh mountain ewes popped their heads from behind dense growths of western gorse (Perty Wina) to watch our passing towards the island's north-eastern tip. ROGER REDFERN

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Return of Britain's prodigal designer

Katharine Hamnett - for the first time since 1989 - will show her clothes at London Fashion Week, which launches next Friday. Photograph: GRAHAM TURNER

The MEGAN TRESIDDER



INTERVIEW

KATHARINE Hamnett, the fashion designer, is well-known for her exits and entrances. In 1984, she turned up at a Downing Street reception to confront Prime Minister Thatcher wearing a T-shirt printed with "88 per cent Say No To Pershing" missiles. In 1989, she stomped out of the British fashion world - at least symbolically - after telling the British Fashion Council that they ran a "shabby" operation. Hamnett is one of the country's best-known designers, whose name helps attract the international press to the London catwalks. She announced that she would not be showing her clothes in London, then went to Paris, then Milan.

Now she is back, and will be one of the biggest names next week when London Fashion Week launches on Friday. She thinks her departure - and that of Galliano, John Rocha and Rifat Ozbek - has persuaded London to clean up its act. No longer are designers expected to mount their shows - hers cost over £100,000 for a 15-minute parade - in the car park at Olympia. Now, they are at the Natural History Museum.

Her first word when we meet is a firm no, shouted from across the room. I had been waiting in her down-at-heel Hackney offices - in startling contrast to her Sloane Street shop, where the decor mixes aquaria with recycled ceramic telephone wire connectors for lights. In Hackney, Katharine Hamnett Ltd is open-plan, with a stained carpet. Her staff - girls with Big Hair, young men with little sideburns - run around, telling each other how crazy things are with only a week to go. The latest Fashion Weekly predicts that next spring will bring dimid skirts and diluted ox-blood tones. I ask Hamnett's press officer whether I might look round the cutting room. "No, you can't," says Hamnett, suddenly appearing behind him, barring the way. The makings of the '96 winter collection are in there - and Hamnett is said to be the most copied designer in the world.

We settle down in the middle of the office. Hamnett flops length on a sofa. She is tall and

striking, with a horsey-looking face. She speaks with the plummy accent - though not the vocabulary - of Cheltenham Ladies College, one of the 11 schools she went to all over Europe, as the daughter of a diplomat. Her press officer, Julian, joins us. He will have his work cut out getting her to keep to the script. She admits to not wearing her own designs today. "Are you sure? It looks like one of your shirts," he says, hopefully. She's sure about a lot of things. She is sacrificially outspoken. She finds Armani's clothes "very stodgy" and says the Paris and Milan shows are infected with "the Chanel suit virus".

She is also terrifically inconsistent. She enthuses about current British design, how British designers are working behind the scenes, for the big European names - including "stodgy" Armani. She is notoriously capricious. She is a wealthy left-winger who sent her sons (now 13 and 19) to Bedales. She holds herself aloof from the pretensions of the fashion world but cultivates a mysterious look for photographs, insisting on dark glasses. (So she can go out without them, and not be recognised.) She is consistent in refusing to answer questions about her background. She was born Katharine Appleton in 1948 (the Hamnett is from her marriage to a graphic designer in the seventies). Her father was a defence attaché, "a really moral man" who became depressed after brokering a fighter-plane deal with the Swedes. She has said this contributed to his suicide in 1976, which may explain her political passion. The constant moves taught her independence, and her mother loved clothes. That's it. Was she an only child? "I was the youngest of 36," she says obliquely. "So I am not interested in these details. I am only interested in what sells frocks."

She manufactures in Italy and sells well in nearly 30 countries. Behind the public image is a hard-headed businesswoman. She refuses to let celebrities wear her clothes for free. "We're here to sell frocks, not give them away. We charge everybody." She has fallen out with colleagues, with Joseph Ettedgui, who helped her get started by selling her clothes in his shop. She left him for another entrepreneur. That relationship turned sour, after differences over retailing approach, and nearly ended up in court.

Now she controls her business herself - "it's mine, all mine," she says in half-parody. "I am practically the only person in the world who fits all the criteria. I like the fittings. I like dragging the cutter in and demanding 1.22 milli-

metres shaved off the collar by this afternoon. I can get really nasty..."

She is known for sexily combative clothes. She uses fabrics in completely new ways - like lining silk - which are instantly copied by the high-street chains. She ignores what is going on - "I don't go to fashion shows. I'd be afraid I'd think their clothes so good, I'd knock them off." But look round her shop and it is full of this season's ideas. How does she independently think of using mock crocodile along with everyone else?

"I hope we didn't do mock croc this season," she says. The press officer corrects her. "Oh, we did? It's hard to explain. It's a collective unconscious. I can get a thing now about colour, and know, because I've been in this business long enough, that it is going to happen. It's radar... We're working on next winter and I am not going to tell you about that, because I hope no one else is going to think of it. You work partly on instinct, and partly in reaction to what you

Wearable can be fun... I never wanted to be boss but it is the only way I know how to survive

have already seen too much of." Who has seen too much of it? The shopper or the designer whose business relies on selling anew each season?

"No, I don't believe in planned obsolescence," says Hamnett. "My job is to have people buying my clothes and then come back wanting more because we are making different things that they like. And some things do wear out: jumpers get holes in them. People need to replace worn-out clothing and hopefully they come back to me."

But if she is not designing with obsolescence in mind, then why change successful designs at all? "Because you can't dictate it. It just comes at you. It's instinct. For some reason, you want something with a longer collar. I don't know why..."

Her first business was launched in 1969, in partnership with another designer, Ann Buck, in Covent Garden; they did reasonably well until 1974, when their styles diverged and the partnership split up. She had discovered her first business lesson: wacky clothes don't make you rich. "From then on, I was taking my clothes in a much more

wearable direction. Before, we were doing gladiator suits in the bronzed stuff they used to make men's ballet shoes. Extraordinary objects but sales were zero. Starvation teaches you. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. Wearable can be fun."

For five years, she worked as a freelance designer for Italian and French sportswear companies. "I learnt their elicit tricks, how monstrous they were to clients, and the more monstrous they were, the more the buyers would be pleading to place an order." She started to starve again, "so I took the samples they weren't paying me for, made them up in leather, and took them round to Joseph. I reluctantly went back to manufacturing. I never wanted to be boss but it is the only way I know to survive."

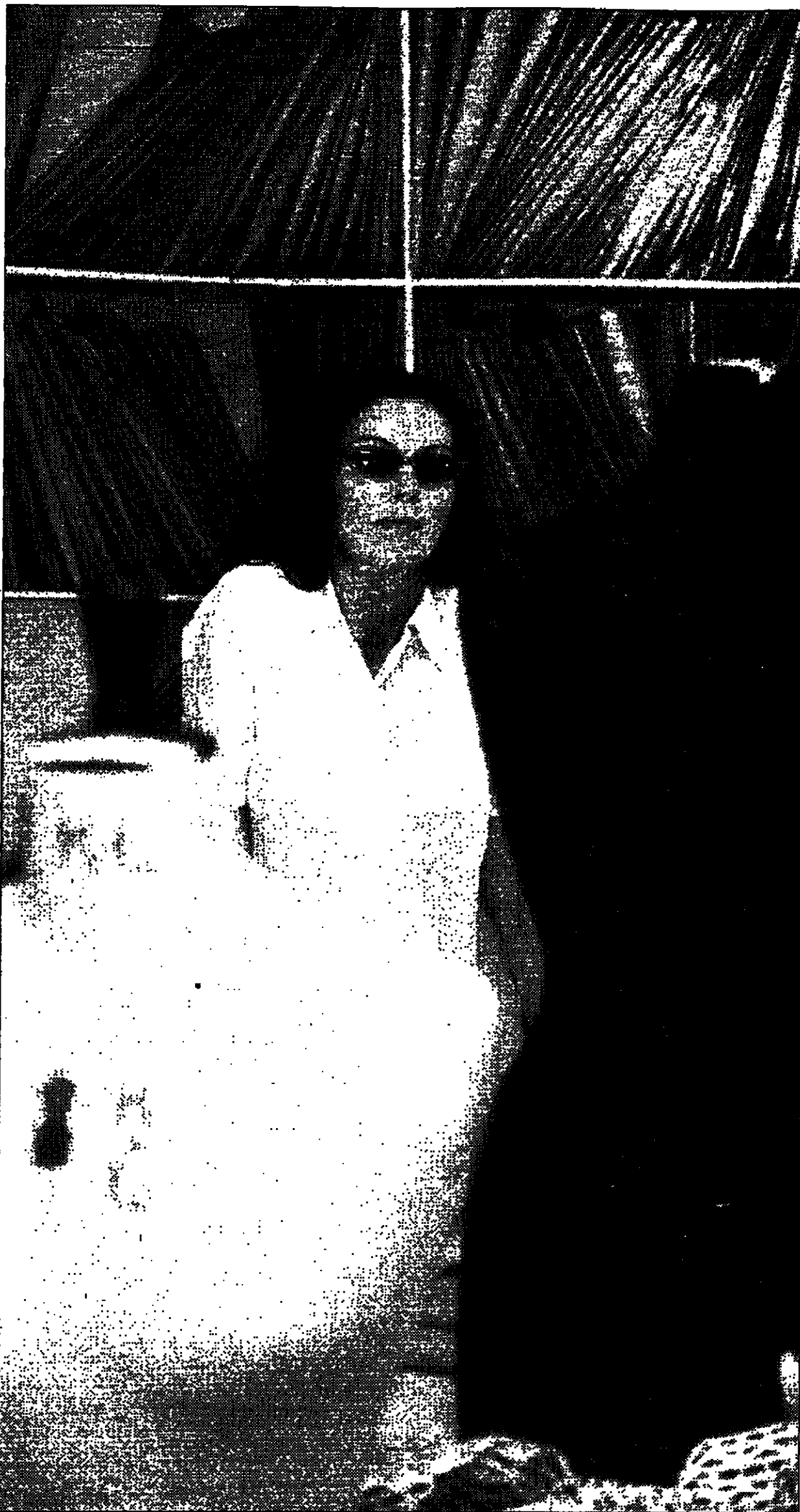
She continues to campaign about the environment and is planning to refit all her shops soon with eco-friendly materials, using compressed cardboard for the counter tops and fittings made from recycled glass. She has done a lot to promote the cultivation of cotton using organic methods but, because cotton has become fashionable (partly thanks to her), agents have started to drive up the price, making it impossible for her to rely on organic cotton for her own designs.

She also uses synthetics despite all her protestations about ecological damage from synthetic processes. "I am not crazy about synthetics, but the new techno-fabrics are the only interesting fabrics on the market. And if you look at the amount of man-made fibre you can get out of a gallon of crude oil, using it to make man-made fibres is a billion times better than using it as fuel. But," she concedes, "some of the chemicals used in the production are pretty hideous. So, yeah, we've got nylon in the collection, covered in shit. What can I say? It is difficult."

The same difficulty - how to be principled and successful at the same time - has arisen over her latest idea for slogan T-shirts. She had thought she would protest against nuclear testing in Mururoa with a line of Ashamed To Be French T-shirts, and then she thought about British policy towards Bosnia and Hong Kong refugees and decided on a second line, saying Ashamed To Be British.

But now she is not so sure. "There was a bit of ding-dong in the office about it," she says. "And we are trying to be positive at the moment, aren't we?"

The press officer reminds her. So the T-shirts are on hold for the moment. "For political reasons," says Hamnett, frankly. "If we came out with Ashamed To Be British T-shirts, everyone will say well, then, fuck off back to Milan. And if we did Ashamed To Be French... well, we've got Perrier water at next week's party."



M-power to the people

ALEX BELLOS meets the alternative election campaigners, who want the under-25s to cast their votes and don't care who they vote for

THE conference season is the start of the race for the next general election. But beneath the noise of the politicians revving up, a quieter campaign has been launched, with a more modest aim than persuading people which way to vote. And this campaign might swing the election.

It's called M-Power and it simply wants young people to be able to vote. In the last election, 2.5 million people aged 18-25 did not do so. The high numbers of 18-25-year-olds not even on the electoral roll - now almost one in five - is a modern phenomenon.

If the US experience is anything to go by, motivating young people to become politically active could affect the final result. In 1982, a campaign in the United States, called Rock The Vote, was credited by some commentators with swinging the 1982 presidential election in Bill Clinton's favour.

It was essentially an anti-censorship celebrity bandwagon from which pop stars told their audiences to vote Democrat, and was perhaps the largest factor in the increase in the number of under-25s voting - from 38 per cent in 1980 to 60 per cent in 1982.

While M-Power is explicitly non-party political - traditionally the recruitment of new young voters is good news for Labour - it was inspired by the US success. Run

by the British Youth Council and Active88, the youth wing of Charter 88, it is similarly using music to appeal to the young. It is not the rock world's first appearance in British politics. The group Red Wedge, while galvanising a number of left-leaning pop fans in the eighties, did not win any general elections - if anything, its noisy radical edge symbolised Labour's unelectability at the time.

M-Power is broadcasting regular information slots on Radio Caroline, which is on air in London for the first time since 1969. Several bands on tour have also pledged to take a stall and leaflets with them and the MGM cinema chain has agreed to show a 60-second trailer before some films which suit the market.

M-Power has set itself the task of "reclaiming the political debate for young people". Its thesis is that registration empowers people. If the young register to vote "politicians cannot ignore the concerns of young people, and youth issues must form part of the political agenda. We want to maintain the link between people's lives and politics. The political system stinks, but we are only going to change it by saying that it is wrong," says spokesperson Clare Devereux.

But isn't M-Power in danger of setting on its own feet? If politics stinks so much, why bother getting active? And as young people are more likely to vote Labour, is M-Power po-

litically neutral or really just a kind of Trojan Horse for Labour? Aren't there better ways of becoming active than registering to vote? Look at the rise of "single issues politics" with concerns close to the hearts of the young - animal rights, the environment, racism. Standing in front of a lorry containing veal calves in order to stop it is probably more useful than writing to the registration office.

Not all young political activists have embraced M-Power's philosophy. After all, as Ken Livingstone once remarked, if voting changed anything they would abolish it. A spokesperson for the Brighton-based group, Justice, says: "It is a laudable aim to get people thinking about politics. But the way to change things is not to bring people into the political arena. There is no real political debate in Parliament. Voting would not be a positive act for me."

M-Power disagrees. Clare Devereux says: "If young people registered to vote and then made loud and clear statements about what they are interested in, given the precarious nature of many parliamentary majorities, youth interest issues would have to be discussed. We have no illusions about how difficult this may prove, but the young have been accused of wishful thinking before."

She adds that the organisation's ideals sit comfortably with direct action over single issues, as both are forms of community involvement. And a single issue campaign could be used as a bargaining chip with a vote-seeking politician.

But Warren Carter, aged 29 and a former local government Green candidate, has had personal experience of trying to persuade young people to vote, and isn't hopeful. "The voting procedure doesn't have to be empowering - look at the experience of the Green party. Politicians in power ignore people even when they are in a block. Voting, ultimately, is a compromise."

Britain still has a glitzy motor show. It just doesn't have an industry any more. CHRIS BARRIE recalls a lost world

Famous cars that took the fast lane to oblivion

IF ANYONE can bring back the grand old names of British motoring, Bernd Pischetsrieder can. The chairman of BMW loves cars, particularly racers, and has always been mystified that the British allowed their prestige brand to change hands. But as the recent buyer of the Rover Group, he knows that the British car industry has been characterised by waste. That it is a German company rescuing a famous British name is just the latest irony in an industry congested with

Ford. Lotus has passed through American hands into those of an Italian. Rolls-Royce is dependent, increasingly, on BMW for its engines. Many in the industry expect BMW to take full control of Rolls-Royce from the engineering group Vickers within three years. Foreign ownership of the British car industry is as regrettable as it was inevitable. Jim Randle, professor of automotive engineering at Birmingham University and formerly director of engineering at Jaguar for 14 years, argues

components and systems across several vehicles. British companies cannot remain untouched by the globalisation of the industry. That begs the question, if Riley, Triumph and Austin-Healey do reappear, will they be worthy of their forebears?

The heyday of the British industry was in the 1920s and 1930s, according to Anders Clausager, archivist at the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust. It led the European industry and, after the second world war, Britain was the leading car exporter.

What went wrong has been the subject of much debate. For Clausager, the UK's exclusion from the European Community in the 1960s led to an obsession with home sales. By the 1970s, the great names were struggling, caught up in the bureaucratic nightmare of British Leyland. Overseas takeovers followed.

Yet one irony is that British marques survived longer than their counterparts in France, Germany and Italy because they were not destroyed by war. Another is that the great names mean little to most young drivers.

In the end what makes a car special may have more to do with mass production than names and origins. Try to imagine a modern car matching the grace of a 1920s Bentley Speed Six, with the style of a cathedral on wheels. Unleaded petrol? You must be joking. No wonder the most famous was called "Old No 1".



Gently Bentley... great name with illustrious past

that innovation - once the hallmark of British car development - has disappeared with the acquisition of "our companies". Profits are repatriated. Design of cars assembled in the UK now takes place abroad. A motor show is just the visible tip of an industrial superstructure that costs billions to run. To sustain those costs the industry limits the scope of its designers and engineers by making them use the same

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The listeners are up in arms, but Paul Gambaccini and Nicholas Kenyon tell **STEPHEN MOSS** why Radio 3 had to change

Rock Around the Clock, Radio 3 style

RADIO 3 may not have many listeners, but boy do they make a noise. If you thought Harrison Birtwistle's *Paula* was raucous try this: "I don't think Radio 3 will exist in 10 years' time... the problem is simply stated: crap music abetted by uncritical presentation." That's Tom Lubbock, laying into the station's "Fanzine pact with populism", telling the enemies of stiffness to get stuffed.

Lubbock signed off as radio critic of the Observer with a bitter denunciation of Radio 3 controller Nicholas Kenyon and all his works. To some people, Radio 3 is that important: it is the quintessence of the Reithian BBC, the upholder of quality, culture, truth, integrity.

This week has seen a classic — dangerous word — spat be-

tween the Reithians and the radicals. In the middle, Paul Gambaccini, cozing syrupy sentiments and personal recollections. Radio 3's loyal listeners have not responded well to the new daily hour-long programme of popular pieces, called *Morning Collection*, which began on Monday and schmaltzed its way through the week. The "vandalisation of Radio 3" proclaimed Gerald Kaufman in yesterday's *Guardian*. For Gambaccini, the shade of Gerry Anderson has been summoned up: beware the mob outside Broadcasting House clucking rolled-up copies of *Gramophone* (note the unchanging name of that esteemed organ). All credit to him for facing the music. "I am the Rock Around the Clock of Radio 3," he has boasted to the succession of journalists beating a path to his helpfully open

door. "I shake things up." Indeed. But Radio 3 aficionados think Bill Haley is something to do with comets, and they don't want to be shaken up, thank you.

Gambaccini, a talented and experienced broadcaster, is keeping his sense of humour in the face of an ancient regime sinner. "You could fit the entire audience for the slot I inherited into Wembley Stadium. It's the smallest audience I've had since college radio. Per-

haps some people would prefer to be in Wembley Stadium listening to Gillian Reynolds [the *Telegraph's* radio critic and Gambaccini's play records. But my view is that if nobody wants Radio 3, it will die."

Gambaccini is fond of cultural connections: rock music, classical music, film. He has a finger in every artistic pie. He has a regular slot where he

plays a piece of classical music made famous by a film — for those of us who can't hear Rachmaninov without thinking of *Brief Encounter*.

He says he has a carefully calibrated approach to what he does. "A career broadcaster has to be the equivalent of multi-lingual — you fit the language to the medium."

His Radio 3 lingo, he insists, is different from his Classic FM one, but he wants the same result in terms of boosting audience.

"At Classic FM I erected a building on a vacant lot. I drew in more people [audiences of a million-plus] than had ever listened to classical music in the UK. At Radio 3 I'm starting with an audience of 100,000."

He finds it ironic that when he was on Radio 1 he was seen as heavyweight; now he is deemed lightweight, part of the network's plucky downmar-

ket. "I can do academic serious...," he says — biographical note: Ivy League, Oxbridge, fine classical pianist, historian of rock music, reviews film for *Kalifornia* and *GMTV*.

...but I've rejected it. It's obsolete for the slot I occupy. An institution in broadcasting, as in nature, has to evolve or it becomes extinct."

Gambaccini is a convenient target for the wrath of Disgusted of you know where, but the real villain is Kenyon, the man who brought you Brian Kay's *Sunday Morning* and daytime classics. Kenyon is unrepentant.

Of the Gambaccini gambit he says: "We wanted a programme at that time of the morning [8-10am] when we know there are large numbers of floating radio listeners, a programme that would be well-

coming." But he is quick to counter accusations that Radio 3 has adopted Classic FM's programming, arguing that his station is still committed to playing whole works.

The Haydn piano sonatas Gambaccini has been playing this week are held up as a badge of honour.

Kenyon has no time for the exclusive attitudes once associated with the network. He thinks that in the morning people don't have the time or the inclination to listen to whole concerts; hence the short, accessible works that dominate the schedule from 8am until midday.

Kenyon has been here before, and now has his story off pat: accessibility equals bigger audiences equals more protection for the things that really matter — the Proms, the BBC orchestras, live opera relays. His critics say the station's her-

itage has been dissipated; that context has been all but abandoned in favour of musical tidbits — shave to Schubert, drive to Dukas, sleep to Satie.

If you want the opinion of the average listener (ie, me), *Morning Collection* is a mistake: not because it's unnecessary. On Air is a gentle introduction to the rigours of the day; by nine the coffee has taken effect. Composer of the Week could be obscure — I recall an unhealthy obsession with Hindemith — but if you bothered to listen you'd start to understand.

The shift is only symbolic — after all, Composer of the Week is still on, in all its stately glory, at midday — but symbols are important. Kenyon is saying that what matters most are numbers. Brian Kay's *Sunday Morning* pot pourri gets

the biggest audience of any programme on Radio 3 and is therefore a success. It doesn't matter that it's an awful programme full of second-rate English music, introduced in a dreadful, glutinous, chummy, horribly Home Counties style.

Kenyon is wrong — Gambaccini, despite the good intentions, does paragonise listeners — but his critics are more wrong. Of course Radio 3 has to change, broaden its audience, cover other forms of music, look for cultural cross-reference. The real problem starts with the obsession with dividing up channels, stations, areas of life — this mad world of push v pop, dramas v soaps, serious v silly. Art is about odd juxtapositions: absorb, enjoy, appreciate everything. Don't reject until you've sampled; judgement is the death of thought.

ROBERT YATES on the rise and rise of Jimmy Nail, former criminal turned actor, singer, scriptwriter, sex symbol and control freak

Why is he so special?

JIMMY NAIL has a tip for all the blokes: if you want to wear your sister's dress, best pick a woollen one because wool has more give in it. It's a tip he picked up fronting a band in Newcastle in the 1970s. Nail figured that if he made himself larger than life — wearing a dress along with his boots — people might not notice the band's mediocre sound.

The unkind might say that it's a trick he's not forgotten, given the success — and mediocrity — of his musical releases over the past 10 years. (He first had a hit with a version of *Love Don't Live Here Anymore* in 1985; his new single *Big River* is released next week.) Music, it's true, is not the most impressive part of his portfolio. The sentimentalities that run through his output are not leavened by the humour of his TV work.

Even the more generous of observers — those who judge Nail to be if not a versatile character actor then a great TV presence, who has also become a decent screenwriter (Spender, the less convincing *Crocodile Shoes*) — will recognise the aptness of the title. For nothing Nail has been involved in, with the possible exception of *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, the bricks-in-Germany TV drama in which he made his acting debut in 1983, has quite the colour of his own life. Nail, after all, is the only Renaissance man who includes head-butting among his list of skills.

Although on artistic terms, people might object to a South Bank Show dedicated to Nail (to be screened on TV tomorrow), as a sign of the times — interested as we are in a creator's life as much as his work — Nail is a perfect choice. It's a life which, at least initially,

fails to hit a consistent tone. Sometimes it seems to unfold like a *Viz* cartoon strip, with endless knockabout stuff: Nail spent his youth down the "loos" in a continual round of beer and fights. At other times, it's grim *Play For Today* fare: he has a history of petty crime, and served a four-month stretch in prison for GBH. And finally, when things start turning sour, Nail could be the driving force of a Willy Russell parable, a story of taking control through self-education.

Nail was making his living in the building trade when his wife persuaded him to audition for *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*. Legend has it that he persuaded the writers, Ian La Frenais and Dick Clements, that he was the right man for the part of Oz, with an impromptu display of truculence. Arriving for the audition, his opening gambit ran: "Get a move on because my car's on a double yellow line, and I don't fucking want to be here." Oz was the sort of character who preferred to communicate with his fists, a no-nonsense Geordie who made it his business to vex his German hosts. In the end, Nail was the right man for the part of Oz, with an impromptu display of truculence. Arriving for the audition, his opening gambit ran: "Get a move on because my car's on a double yellow line, and I don't fucking want to be here."

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Later, *Big Boy* was responsible for the music business drama, *Crocodile Shoes*, a



Hard as nails... Jimmy Nail must be the only renaissance man to include head-butting in his list of skills. PHOTO: PAUL CHESLOW

them in the face. But you can't punch the whole nation." Looking back, he says that he — like Oz — was a "monumental arsehole".

Rather than bleat about stereotyping and wait for other more wholesome roles to come his way, Nail decided to create one for himself. With Ian La Frenais's help, he dreamed up Spender at the beginning of the nineties, and played the cool, Armani-wearing Geordie policeman himself. By the time of the second series, he was not only writing most of the episodes, but had set up his own company, *Big Boy*, to produce the show.

Later, *Big Boy* was responsible for the music business drama, *Crocodile Shoes*, a

none too plausible view of a record company in which Nail also starred. All the time, he was becoming more of a power player, the on-screen face who was also pulling the financial and creative strings.

Commissioning editors normally rely on the producer to keep the madman star in check, he says. But what do they do when the madman is in complete control? And this control goes far. He insists, for instance, on approving all photographs for interview purposes. Andrew Collins, editor of *Q* magazine, had an uneasy encounter with Nail earlier this year. "Of course, we're used to copy approval with all these swanky stars. But he has been the fussiest

ever. We sent him seven sheets, he sent back one photo." The chosen shot is mean and moody, a man in charge. According to Ian La Frenais, this control mania is a working-class thing born of a determination to stay on top, not to fall back down.

Of course, Nail's wouldn't be an emblematic English story if it were not shot through with class. In the South Bank Show profile, writer Paul Campbell uses his life and work for some sociological analysis. According to this line, Nail, as Oz, represented the "exiled, hopeless proletarian man", having to leave his country for work. By the time he became Spender, he had become the cool, dissident metropolitan, a

Geordie with some power. (A power which next year will bring him alongside that other celebrated control freak, Madonna, when he plays opposite her in Alan Parker's adaptation of *Evita*.)

Campbell's theorising might seem to hang too much on a couple of characters, but Nail himself is the first to relate the changes in the roles to changes in his own life. His is a story of getting on and making sure the world knows about it. In the programme, he returns to Newcastle proud to have given something back to the city, in the shape of Spender which was filmed there.

If he could play football, Sir John Hall would no doubt sign him.

Reviews

COMEDY

Eddie Izzard
Shaftesbury Theatre

EMERGING from the pages of a giant book wearing an orange Gaudier jacket and thigh-length boots, Eddie Izzard in his new show certainly *pulls the first* definition of comedy: he offers an arresting image. But for much of the first half I was mildly restless. His choice of subject — supermarket queues and all-night petrol stations — was not that original, and like many monologists, he tended to milk an idea for more than it was worth. But, after the interval, I saw why Izzard arouses such enthusiasm. He began to fly with some genuinely funny ideas such as an Anglo-French schoolboy exchange taking place, like a spy-plot, at dead of night on a ferry car deck. Even better was his notion of the Corinthians signing under the weight of letters from St

Paul and asking themselves whose idea it was to take "Mr Dreary" on as a pen-pal.

But when Izzard won me over was when a nipple-button unexpectedly popped off his jacket. Crying "I'm not going on like this," Izzard stopped the show while he hunted for needle and thread. Intriguingly, he confessed that he was breaking a golden rule of comedy: keep the energy going. But comedy can also be the art of public relaxation; and I found Izzard even funnier when he stopped trying so hard to make us laugh.

He is undoubtedly an original: he has intelligence, charm and, with his heavy, lipstick-stained face and tapering body, a freaky strangeness. He is also a real theatre comic with a carefully structured act built around recurring motifs. I read that he wants to up his profile and do the TV chat-shows. I hope he doesn't — come just another comic commodity.

□ Until Dec 16. 0171-578 6389
Michael Billington

POP

Jimmy Somerville
Clapham Grand

IT MUST be a long time since London's Clapham Grand played host to so much thirty-something smogging and dirty dancing. There is something about Jimmy Somerville that manages to unite gay men and lesbians of a certain age. I think it's his appearance. He is so pugly that fans just take in the wonderful falsetto and disco-diva danceability, and get on with their own thing.

The man is a veritable catalyst of love, his music a rhythmic aphrodisiac. And boy did these boys (and girls) know how to dance. A special mention for the grey-suited men who must have escaped from the Conservative Party conference, camping for Britain, whooping for the world, and making ingenious use of each other's back pockets.

Somerville has been a way for four years, appearing in the odd movie (notably *Orlando*) and setting up a gay film company with director Isaac Julien, and living himself a real life. Now he's returned with a couple of hit singles and a tour. Tonight

was a greatest hits compilation from Bronski Beat, Communards and solo days, and he had a great time making himself laugh with his little jokes, and as good as hecking himself.

He hit the highest notes perfectly, the not quite so high notes equally perfectly and more enjoyably, and showed a surprising vocal range, not unlike the other tiny one formerly known as Prince.

Somerville has always been more than a dancing queen, and By Your Side, dedicated to friend Hugo who died of AIDS, was desperately moving. The title track of the new album, *Dare To Love*, reminded us what a fine narrative lyricist he is. ("He remembers at 14 he knew what he wanted/He wanted a man not psychiatry/Just to be held to be told it was all right/All he got was a hospital bed/And some pills to sleep at night"). Don't Leave Me This Way was a marvel. The three-minute miracle of Philly soul always was, but Somerville's version is extra special. I am prepared to wager that even Queen Victoria, were she still around, would fire her hand into the air for the "sassafras baby" bit and wave it like fury as if flagging down the last taxi to heaven.

Simon Hattenstone

THEATRE

Rat in the Skull
Duke of York's

RON HUTCHINSON's *Rat in the Skull* opens a season of Royal Court classics at a transformed Duke of York's. And any fears that the play would be rendered obsolescent by the Northern Irish peace process prove unfounded. What Hutchinson is writing about is the ancestral, tribal and almost visceral opposition between Catholic and Protestant that will not easily be resolved by any constitutional document.

Hutchinson's play is dated: only in the sense that it is the product of a particular time: in this case the fear and tension of the mid-1980s. We see Roche, a suspected IRA terrorist, holed up in Paddington Green police station (west London) where he is being "interviewed" by Nelson, a hard RUC detective. For much of the play we see the silent Roche taunted and baited by the needling Nelson. But the crucial moment comes when the two men conspire to be left alone by the supervising English constable and Nelson blows the case and his career by beating up the suspect.

Even in 1984 Hutchinson was not suggesting that British troops withdrawal or a patched-up peace was an impossibility. His point was, and is, that Irish Catholics and Protestants are bound together by history and pride in a way that the English will never comprehend.

The play survives because it

is passionate, honest and ritualistic in its confrontation of the two men. Its only real weakness is that Hutchinson tries too hard to motivate Nelson's act of destructive violence. We are left feeling that it may be prompted, in part, by the death of his father or the desertion of his wife when the whole burden of the play is to suggest that what really drives him is an atavistic hatred that is the product of the centuries.

But the excess of explanation and even the odd patch of overwriting are camouflaged by Stephen Daldry's production and William Dudley's design which highlight the ritual nature of the encounter. The stalls area has been overlaid with an artificial metallic stage, Roche and Nelson confront each other in a triangular pit and the whole auditorium is surrounded by a wall of pikes evoking the Troubles. It brings us close to the action and makes us feel that we too are locked into this hermetic world.

Tony Doyle's Nelson is a stunning portrait of an obsessive who will sacrifice anything for the sake of primal revenge. And Rufus Sewell's Roche, twitching and flinching under a barrage of insults, suggests a man in whom violence builds up with volcanic pressure. Good support from John Castle and Pearce Quigley as the English cops help to confirm that this is a strong, authentic play that stems from a particular moment in time while also expressing fundamental truths, which is the definition of a classic.

Michael Billington

A game of two half-wits

Television

Stuart Jeffries

IN FRASIER the other week, Niles, the winningly effete shrink, was inveigled into going to a ball game with his dad. Some latecomer sat next to him and asked: "Hey buddy, what's the score?" Niles took off his headphones and replied: "West Side Story."

And that's pretty much how right-thinking people feel about English football. "What's the score?" "Excuse me — you're mistaking me for someone who's interested."

The absence of technique, the pointlessness, the endless balls — and that's just the manager's half-time pep talk. The spectacular tedium of England-Norway on Wednesday night brought all this into

focus and made Gary Linaker's *Dreaming Of Ajax* (BBC2) desperately topical.

The ubiquitous ex-referee's thesis was that the Dutch club has been successful because of its intensive youth team policy. The results are impressive: we're talking Cruyff, Bergkamp and Cluiver, rather than the clod hoppers of Oslo.

All of this sounded dreamy for those few who are successfully groomed for the first team. But what of the rest? And should education be entrusted to teachers at a football club as it is at Ajax? Linaker's impressionistic case was too caught up in righting the wrongs of English football by importing a version of Ajax's scheme to consider its defects.

But it was singular: a football documentary that was free from the ironising post-Nick Hornby approach to the game which has governed our foot-

ball-infested screens, from *Fantasy Football* to the previous night's *Leyton Orient: A Club For A Piver* (C4).

This fly-on-the-wall documentary about the Os' grisly 1994/5 season was a low-rent version of the legendary Graham Taylor gaffe-athon. It had everything: looming liquidation, relegation and a stricken manager who appeared to be wearing a larger man's ears.

The most desperate moment came when they ran out of money to pay for the coach to the Stockport game. "How we gonna get there?" "Dunno."

The manager, John Stilton, was a gift to this programme — bullying, vulgar, and with a muck that always looked as though it was manfully holding back about two gallons of tears. He bawled Socratically at one player at half-time: "What did I tell you about how good players want to be good players all the time? Don't you

know how profound that is? Have you not examined the fucking words?"

The rest of his team talks were not only too coarse for a family newspaper, but would have made foul-mouthed sailors blush for shame. Sacked by the new chairman, he has since been banned from the ground — probably not for being too polite to staff.

The *Cafe Nervosa's* capucino was unorthodox this week — Frasier was abandoned in favour of *Heroes Of Comedy: Tommy Cooper* (C4), who may not have been a great footballer but certainly could have sweated for England. Cooper was once presented to the Queen after a show. "You were so funny Mr Cooper. 'Did you think so? Then could I ask you something personal, your Majesty?' 'Yes.' 'Do you like football?' 'Not particularly.' 'Can I have your Cup Final tickets, then?'"

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Taken for a ride by lords of the manor

GEORGE MONBIOT and JOHN VIDAL preview next week's White Paper on rural land use and see the big owners tightening their grip
Photograph: DENIS THORPE

New country ways... access for leisure use gets a rough ride too

JOHN MAJOR will this weekend return home from Blackpool, via London, to Huntingdonshire. In his two-way 500-mile traverse of 13 counties it's unlikely that he will see anyone actually working the land, pass more than a few varieties of crops or spot more than a handful of people walking. He might ask just what and what the countryside is for, apart from drivers, fast roads and more development. The view from Fimings, the PM's house, is a metaphor for rural Britain. Mr Major looks out over one intensively farmed, brutal, nameless 250-acre arable field which old OS maps show used to be 19 fields each named according to place or person. Today the cereal barons employ accountants and handfuls of poorly paid men to do what, in living memory, was the livelihood of whole villages. Many landowners earn more in a year from not farming bits of land than most rural families do in a decade. The nearest village, Great Stukeley, is full of Cambridge and London commuters, drawn to the countryside by intolerable living conditions in the cities. The small shops have closed; in their place supermarkets have come, mining the local economy and returning profits to remote head offices in return for offering the fruits of anywhere except nearby.

To live in Huntingdonshire is, like almost everywhere in rural Britain today, to need a car, to fear crime, to expect low pay, strapped councils, far-away hospitals and under-financed schools. To be young in the country is to expect underemployment, few leisure facilities, and unaffordable homes. To be old is to be increasingly dependent. This, said environment secretary John Gummer when he addressed the Tory party this week, is "the real, workaday countryside" that the Conservatives will next week appeal to with the first Rural White Paper since the 1942 "Scott report". The document seeks to bring together housing, leisure, farming, planning and transport policies.

But where Scott, haunted by war needs and malnutrition, could call for a giant dig for self-sufficient Britain, the 1985 DoE/Ministry of Agriculture paper must reflect post-industrial reality — where a true rural economy based on land itself has ceased to exist, where cultural relationships with the countryside are now rooted in escape or informed by television. And as space becomes precious — a playground as much for hikers and ravers as for farmers and climbers — so governments must grapple with new tensions and greater forces.

Whatever ministers might like to do, the countryside is now beholden to Europe, the global free trade economy and forces beyond their control. Yet never have more people clamoured for a say in its administration or use. Rural Britain, where 25 per cent of us live, is socially complex, fought over by powerful lobbying groups and quangos, homogenised by technology and made so accessible by roadbuilding that it defies overall government policies just when fresh thinking is needed. The patterns of life in town and country are inexorably merging.

Instead of big ideas, the White Paper will therefore fiddle with the fringes of concern, maintain the orthodoxies about agriculture, conservation and land ownership, and be a political document full of invariable blandness. Its best hope is to show that the old heartlands of party support, now being assailed by the Liberal Democrats, are in good Tory hands. The green buzztalk will be there: "sustainability", "diversity" and "community" will feature meaninglessly. There will be more money for conservation, talk of the role of new technologies and celebration of small initiatives. Gummer will rightly eschew the romantic, idealised countryside that city people still yearn for; but like other politicians he will likely founder on old cultural myths, upheld by millions — John Major among them — for whom our ancient, closely managed landscape remains a sort of unofficial coat of arms.

What happens to the countryside is seen to reflect the state of the nation. Yet in the public mind arable landscapes seemingly modelled on military airbases and a livestock sector resembling something out of the Island Of Dr Moreau are perceived as reflective of a country which has forgotten how to be human. Exclusion not only from the land itself but also from the decision-making processes affecting it seems, as much as any other political circumstance, to reflect both a class-based hierarchy and visible widespread marginalisation.

Just as visible are the landowners. Britain's large proprietors are few in number (we have one of the world's most concentrated patterns of land ownership) but they remain extraordinarily powerful. Both the Commons and the Lords are densely populated by members of the Country Landowners Association (CLA), while on county, district and, above all, parish councils, they and those who defer to them are still influential.

We manage to think of our landowners as guardians of the taxpayer while guaranteeing for conservation, which is presumably what Gummer means by "spreading conservation principles to the wider countryside". Farm subsidies are extremely unpopular, as they are perceived to be fleecing the taxpayer while guaranteeing for conservation, which is presumably what Gummer means by "spreading conservation principles to the wider countryside". Farm subsidies are extremely unpopular, as they are perceived to be fleecing the taxpayer while guaranteeing for conservation, which is presumably what Gummer means by "spreading conservation principles to the wider countryside".

economic necessity, but under the guardianship of CLA members, the countryside has lost almost 50 per cent of its ancient woodlands since the war, and 70 per cent of its downland and around 80 per cent of its heathland this century.

Under the circumstances then, it is unsurprising that John Gummer's conference speech, in which he hinted at the contents of the White Paper, stayed on safe ground. Gummer mocked the easy targets: interfering incomers to the countryside, people who complain about cockerels and tractors, demand street lighting, crazy paving and municipal flowerpots. Predictably he rounded on "ravers, trespassers and hippy camps". He scoffed at Labour for promoting a "right to roam" but, perhaps

stifling economic development in rural Britain are bunkum: 80 per cent of all proposed developments are passed. But it is Gummer's "determination to keep the future of the countryside secure in country people's hands" which offers the real hint that the country landowners have beaten off the myriad groups like the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Friends of the Earth.

The fact is that the "country people" in whose hands the real future of the countryside lies are the small minority who own it. The rural status quo remains sharply defined, and what landowners fear most is increasing involvement in their activities by those over whom they have no immediate power — townspeople.

Gummer's speech will have put these fears to rest. By calling for a greater role for parish councils — mostly unelected bodies, in some cases wholly controlled by the local landowner — he could scarcely have made clearer his resistance to the democratisation of rural land use policies.

Not until we see what is missing from the White Paper will we know just how successful the CLA and its supporters have been. They are already crowing that they have seen off lobbying to extend "right to buy" policies for housing association tenants in settlements of less than 3,000 people. All the signs are that they have done well. Gummer made no mention, for example, of the General Development Order, the blanket planning permission for farm buildings which has been one of the targets of the conservation lobby.

At the moment farmers can erect any agricultural building without even informing a local authority, provided that each unit measures less than 465 square metres and 12 metres tall. While any modification to

human housing is rigorously assessed, as long as you build at two-year intervals you can cover your entire farm with concrete without notifying anyone. As silos and concrete barns blot the most pristine horizons — National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations notwithstanding — these exemptions from planning control appear ever more anomalous.

Nor can we expect to hear anything about mandatory land registration. At present, only around 50 per cent of the land in England and Wales is registered, and the identity of the true owners remains obscure. Land ownership will continue to be shrouded in secrecy.

The constraints on the Government's vision will nowhere be more apparent than in its prescriptions for revitalising the rural economy. Curiously, nearly all the proposals — such as the movement of insurance and software companies from towns to villages — discuss only the urban economy, and how to move it into the countryside.

We are unlikely to see any farm subsidies which reflect the number employed in agriculture, even though this is now smaller, per head of population, than even Hong Kong. Nor, in Mr Gummer's Britain, will there be any room for new farming communities or any boost to fading local trading networks, the direct link between producers and consumers which help make different regions places in their own right, rather than just nodes on the Internet.

Scott's brief was to deal with the technical imperative of producing more food for Britain in needy wartime. It worked, brilliantly. The price, paid later, was being unable to prevent the erosion of the countryside or the emergence of "decadent agriculture". Gummer's epitaph may be that in a time of plenty he addressed not the nation's needs but the narrow interests of elites, and that he and the Ministry of Agriculture failed to have the courage or imagination to change anything of real social substance.

For all the landowners' talk of upholding countryside values and protecting the environment they have proved themselves to be cultural curmudgeons and ecological vandals

remembering the Ramblers' 100,000 uppy members, qualified this by calling for footpaths and access in some places. Few will argue with making more subsidies available for conservation, which is presumably what Gummer means by "spreading conservation principles to the wider countryside". Farm subsidies are extremely unpopular, as they are perceived to be fleecing the taxpayer while guaranteeing for conservation, which is presumably what Gummer means by "spreading conservation principles to the wider countryside".

In line with broader government deregulation, there will, it seems, be fewer planning constraints on small businesses in the countryside — though a new CPEP paper shows claims that the planning system is

A day coming and going without any reckoning was heavenly, one existed in eternity

R K Narayan, right, recalls his childhood in Madras

CHILDHOOD is the only time when one can enjoy a sense of being alive, letting the day pass without counting the hours. One hardly understands a clock on the wall. Occasionally my grandmother would call from the kitchen to ask, "See the clock and say what the small hand is showing." I had to hoist myself on a stool and after a long scrutiny answer, "The small hand is nowhere."

"It must be under the large one... wait till it moves" — the hand would, of course, move eventually, and I would shout, "No number — some lines, that is all," referring to the Roman numerals. I was taught only Arabic numbers up to 12 by my grandmother.

A day coming and going without any reckoning was heavenly, one existed in eternity.

It was morning when you opened your eyes, night when you shut them — like the leaves of the enormous rain-tree in front of our home; its leaves automatically folded up at dusk and opened at dawn. I got up from bed, was fed, washed and dressed in a shirt and a dhoti and lived the day mostly sitting on our doorstep and watching horse-drawn jukkas, rickshaws, and men and women.

When the first world war started, I was eight years old, and did not notice it till a passing warship, the Emden, fired shells in our direction, just for fun, and knocked down a few feet of the High Court compound wall, and set ablaze an oil storage tank in the harbour and passed on playfully. Even the elders did not take the bombardment seriously, only

talked about it, and went out to pick up souvenirs of shellings from the High Court compound. The state of innocence and spontaneous joy in existence are lost when one is sent to school. On the first day I wept bitterly — the masters looked like tormentors and my class fellows fearsome bullies. My life at Number 1 Vellala Street under the care of my grandmother was heavenly. My parents were in Bangalore and I was taken to Madras by my grandmother when I was two years old, to afford relief to my mother who bore the next child closely following my birth.

This sudden catapulting into a world of tormentors was uncalculated for me on the part of my elders. I could not understand what pleasure they derived in driving me out of home

every morning. Promptly at nine, they fed me rice, vegetables and buttermilk, put a cap on my head and a coat over my shirt and dhoti, and then I progressed like Shakespeare's "whining schoolboy, with his satchel" And shining morning face, creeping like a snail Unwillingly to school. At school, the masters looked fearsome as they sat in their chairs flourishing a cane. When the last bell rang, I ran home grateful that I was still intact.

Fear was one dominant feature in school life. Our scripture master in particular threatened that upstairs (under the crucifix on the roof) there was a torture chamber reserved for delinquents and heathens. I had to suffer this school for eight years till I reached the high school stage.

On a bright evening, peeping over the parapet upstairs I noticed one Kothandam, who owned a fuel and bamboo shop across the road and was supposed to be summoned by mothers to chastise intractable boys in our street. He was in our garden, plucking flowers. Immediately I fled to the single room there and hid myself behind clothes piled up on a wooden stand, confident that Kothandam would leave soon

and not come up in search of me.

As the evening wore out and night came on, I was seized with panic, but dared not look out, not being sure if Kothandam had left. I sat still and heard voices downstairs. My grandmother, greatly worried, had collected our tenants who lived in little apartments in the rear portions of our home for advice and help after calling out my name repeatedly. I could hear them discussing me.

Some kind of annual religious festival was being held in front of Kothandam's fuel shop, attracting a big crowd of worshippers, vendors of eatables and paper toys and so forth. In such a crowd, children were reputed to be lost.

I spoke to myself, "Until I know Kothandam is gone, I can't venture out," and tried to sing softly to assure myself that I was all right. I could hear my uncle's voice in the medley downstairs. He was back from a night school he was conducting for children living in slums. "Where? Where could he have gone?"

I could hear his steps on the stairs, he peeped in calling out "Kunjappa! Kunjappa! where are you?" (They called me Kunjappa, which means fledgling in Tamil.) I was on the point of answering, "Is Kothandam gone? Tell me that first," but I

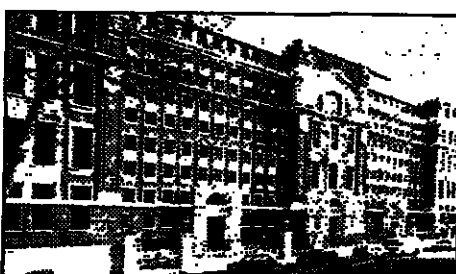
choked the words back. I saw my uncle look about in the dark and leave. He went down and came up again, and again I restrained myself from answering, watching him from my hiding-place.

Amidst the babble of sympathetic neighbours I could hear my grandmother lamenting, "Where could the child have gone? He must be hungry and starving." Someone said, "In a festival crowd anything could happen... kidnappers..." At which my grandmother let out a louder wail and then uttered prayers to the God on Virajapathi Hill, promising offerings including a turtleneck (of my head) in his divine presence.

Near midnight, hunger and fear of darkness compelled me to go down and announce myself. Meanwhile my uncle had gone out to alert the police. If I was not thrashed for the total dislocation caused by me, it was due to their indulgence and a feeling of relief. I was, however, warned, "Remember the police are on the look-out. Take care..."

I took this warning seriously and gave up the habit of sitting on our doorstep to watch the street, since a policeman in red turban stood on customary duty at the street corner. I had not noticed him all these days, but now his presence seemed sinister.

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THE FINE ART OF LOFT LIVING

Dilwyn John

Sea quest from Wales to whales and back again

DILWYN JOHN, who has died aged 93, was a zoologist whose career took him to the south of South Kensington and the directorship of the National Museum of Wales — which flourished under his care.

In 1937 and 1938 he was chief scientist aboard the Royal Research Ship, *William Scoresby*, working mainly in the Falkland-Magellan area, and from 1931 to 1933 the RRS *Discovery 2* — successor to Captain Scott's ship. The latter made the first winter circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent — for which voyage John was awarded the Polar Medal — and worked between the pack-ice and the Falklands, South Africa and Australia, an often unenviable occupation exposed to the rigours of the Roaring Forties but compensated for by discoveries of strange animals and observations new to science. At that time he specialised in the study of krill — the shrimp-like crustacean eaten by whales.

John, a Welsh farmer's son, studied at an Aberystwyth agricultural school but his

tutors encouraged him to enrol at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he took a zoology first. His early postgraduate years were spent working with the Discovery Investigations (now absorbed into the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences) which then focused on biological problems of whales and whaling and took him to the Southern Ocean.

In the mid-thirties John became curator of echinoderms at the British Museum (Natural History) and was then called *Echinoderms* are a group of marine invertebrates which include starfishes, brittle stars, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, sea lilies and feather stars. These are of lesser economic importance than crustaceans but are significant in marine food chains as predator or prey.

In this second career he was able to utilise his knowledge of Antarctic biology in preparing several reports on the seal and feather stars collected by the Discovery and other expeditions to the Southern Ocean (published between 1937 and 1939).

Back in South Kensington

from war service, John began a series of notes on historic specimens of starfishes in the collection. Promotion to the deputy directorship of zoology, and then in 1949 his elevation to the directorship of the National Museum of Wales, cut short this revision which devolved to me as his successor.

I WAS rather diffident about assuming his mantle, but he was kindness itself. Later I read many of his letters to colleagues and inquirers dealing with the study of echinoderms and was impressed not only with his willingness to give time to helping others, wherever possible, but also with his erudition and humour. John was a kind man. His elevation to high rank in the museum service was a considerable loss to marine science.

But he joined the National Museum at an interesting period. His directorship saw many major developments including the expansion of the Welsh Folk Museum — the first of its kind in Britain; the inauguration of the Museum Schools Service; and the cre-

ation of the Department of Welsh Industries.

Alisa Clarke

Millyd Harrington writes: Dilwyn John was that "other" sort of Welshman: laconic, precise, without a sign of flamboyance. He might have stepped out of an early Angus Wilson or Kingsley Amis novel. Nevertheless he guarded his Welsh heritage with a sensitivity not widespread in post-war Wales.

I first met him when he presented me with my school prize, The Life Of J V Stalin, chosen by me to show the rest of them whose side I was on in the Cold War; he thought this hilarious and held up the speech day to put me straight. Shortly after, I took up his invitation to visit him in his study at the museum.

Boldly I suggested that he ought to invest in the newly-invented tape recorder and begin to assemble an archive of Welsh oral history. He in return advised me to go back to Merthyr Tydfil and stop pretending to be the Welsh Karl Marx, and said he hoped I would eventually become a

luminary of the university college at Cardiff.

This antipathy to oral history may have been caused by my presumptuous manner, for John could lay claim to being the father of the Welsh Folk Museum, in St Fagans in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is an outstanding and vital depiction of the life and struggles of the Welsh people.

It was here that I won my third and last encounter with him. This revolved around a 50-year-old battle about who owned Caradoc's Cup. This magnificent silver trophy had been competed for annually by massed choirs at Alexandra Palace. A Welsh choir conducted by one "Caradoc" had won it three times. The irrevocable logic of the Welsh said that after three wins it should revert permanently to them and rest in Wales. The London County Council, the Cup's custodians, responded with an abrupt no. In 1966, by a war of attrition I persuaded the Greater London Council to give it to Wales. Old lady choristers wrote that now they could go peacefully to join the heavenly choir. Bill



Dilwyn John... that 'other' sort of Welshman

Mainwaring, the former veteran miners' MP for Rhondda East, and Eddie James, the ancient London editor of the *Western Mail*, were triumphant. It should, they said, be housed in the National Museum of Wales to celebrate our eventual victory over the English.

Dilwyn bridled. He could not understand our noisy enthusiasm. But eventually he allowed it into St Fagans. He wrote to me: "After all, Caradoc has a statue in Aberdare. That should be enough to satisfy you." He did not like his agenda interfered with by anyone.

Hot-blooded Welshmen perhaps never understood a man whose principal study was invertebrate sea creatures. Yet they responded to his integrity. Honours were rightly heaped upon him and Wales was grateful for his caution and care.

(David) Dilwyn John, echinoderm, explorer and museum director, born November 20, 1901; died October 2, 1995

Gordon DeMarco

Thrillers with America's hidden history

GORDON DeMARCO, who died aged 51, in his isolated cottage near Portland, Oregon, was a writer, an activist and an American original. His first book, *October Heat*, was a hard-boiled mystery, and was at the beginning of that eighties wave which politically subverted the genre. With that and other stories — *Elvis in Aspic*, *Frisco Blues*, *The Canvases* — he reached back into America's hidden histories, with general strikes and anti-fascist resistance as the setting for his hero's adventures rather than mean streets.

Curiously, though, he chose Raymond Chandler rather than Dashiell Hammett, the more overtly leftist in the Who's Who of crime, as his model. He saw Chandler's writing as more of a social investigation than that of his formalised predecessor. Chandler, he felt, had created a language which embodied the poetry of the urban malaise and he incorporated it seamlessly into his own writing.

When Pete Ayton and Ronald Segal began their experimental New Crime series for Pluto Press in the early eighties they saw *October Heat* as a prototype. It became the first book on their list and one of their biggest sellers. Unfortunately, the economic shift in publishing made little room for the likes of DeMarco. After the demise of the Pluto crime list he returned to the niche he had made for himself in the small press world.

Born in the suburbs of Akron, Ohio — in what is now America's rust belt — DeMarco was swept up in the romance of the sixties. He took a history degree at the local university and a masters

in political science from San Francisco State College. He arrived just as the upsurge of 1968 was climaxing and co-chaired the college's Students For A Democratic Society chapter. I met him then and we became lifelong friends.

San Francisco became his spiritual home, though in recent years he despaired of its yuppiehood. He came to England in the mid-eighties, lived in London and then migrated north to what was to become his other great urban love — Edinburgh. He soon became part of the underground scene there, actively producing little marvels for the festival, such as *Who's Afraid Of Abbie Hoffman?* and, later, a rather melancholy pastiche, *Murder At The Fringe*.

But Gordon was never totally comfortable as an expatriate. For some reason I could never understand, he preferred American TV, and Sergeant Bilko remained a perennial favourite. His first years were spent in Portland where in 1992 he founded a publishing venture, West Coast Crime.

Gordon was a marvellous teacher of history and mystery writing, in schools and universities, always encouraging those who took his courses and ever-willing to see the best in what people had to offer. He never achieved due recognition and lived too close to the economic precipice. "Maybe," he once said to me with a twinkle in his eye, referring to his migrant existence, "this is all a bad joke." Then he went off to write another book.

Bob Biderman

Gordon DeMarco, writer and activist, born September 6, 1944; died September 7, 1995

Hugh Charles

A song and a smile for England

HUGH CHARLES, who has died aged 88, had an eye for talent, an ear for a popular song, and more amiability than can be found in an array of today's artists. Hughie — as he was always referred to — discovered Vera Lynn in the late thirties and Shirley Bassey in the mid-fifties. And it was Hughie who, with songwriting collaborator Ross Parker, gave the future Dame her biggest hit with *We'll Meet Again*. The patriotic success extended to Bassey, with her rendition of that chorus song *There'll Always Be An England* — which was a bit strange coming from the girl from Tiger Bay, Cardiff.

Hughie was tall, lean, smiling and forever sporting a well-worn grey lounge suit and a crumpled matching trilby hat. There were few aspects of entertainment with which he was not familiar during his long career.

I was associated with him chiefly through my partnership in the West End with Jack Hylton, one-time band leader and, finally successful, impresario. Hughie had joined the Hylton Organisation soon after the outbreak of war. To be in business with Jack was to know that Hughie did far more than occupy a seat at the office at 3 Savile Row. He was head cook and bottle washer, admittedly, but were it not for his shyness — in a profession where the trademark for success was pushiness — he would have been an impresario himself rather than chief assistant. The reality was that he was an equal partner who did most of the work, a Robinson



All together now... composers Hughie Charles, centre right, and Ross Parker entertain soldiers with I'm Sending You The Siegfried Line

Crusoe rather than the *John Fildes* he was prepared to play.

The bond between Hughie and Jack was probably rooted in their Lancashire — and Manchester — background. Jack was born and bred in Bolton, while Hughie never allowed you to forget that he spent his childhood in Manchester, finally becoming captain of cricket at the John Hulse Grammar School — where he was once spotted by the Lancashire county side.

Hughie eventually opted for a songwriting career, rather than cricketing fame, and arrived in London at the dawn of the thirties as a song-plugger in Charing Cross Road and Denmark Street — Tin Pan Alley. There he provided piano demonstrations for

sheet songs, the common currency of the pre-1930 music business.

By 1939 he had assumed the running of the Irwin Dash Music company. With various collaborators, particularly Ross Parker, more than 50 hit songs followed and Hughie worked with a string of British big bands, such as Ambrose, Billy Cotton, Harry Roy, Gerald and Joe Loss.

Then came Hylton's decision to focus on producing — mostly American — musicals. There was Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate*, Irving Berlin's *Call Me Madam*, and the block-busting *Guinness*. All were Hylton-Charles collaborations, even though the flamboyant band leader got most of the credit. The two men remained close friends. Then in the mid-fifties,

while still heading the Hylton organisation, Hughie launched 19-year-old Shirley Bassey at the Adelphi Theatre in the Strand.

Hughie was a key organiser in the first Royal Variety Performances and presented the three all-black African musicals in London after seeing the show in South Africa.

In the sixties Jack moved to the US and with Ross Parker and the hits were fewer in coming. However Hughie revived the popular *Fo! de Rols* concert party which toured seaside resorts every summer for more than a decade.

His last public appearance was to receive an award for his contribution to British popular music from the Songwriters Guild of Great Britain. It was presented by Petula Clark at a

1980 dinner held in his honour in London, the city in which so many of the now old Mancunian's songs had been sung and whistled many times by the proverbial errand boy.

He retired to Hestfield in Sussex with his wife and former musical comedy actress and principal boy Joan Mann who survives him. He married several times, once to Dolly Elsie, Hylton's sister and former band vocalist. He leaves three sons.

Peter Cotes

Dame Vera Lynn writes: They were the days when singers went around the music publishers, hoping to pick up a good song, and getting acquainted with all the songwriters of the moment. In those times Hugh

Charles was one of Denmark Street's leading lights and I remember him as a quiet, gentlemanly, good looking man.

I sang *We'll Meet Again*, which he co-wrote with Ross Parker, with Ambrose and the gang before the war, and looking back on the reviews, I notice the newspapers picked up on it right away. It was the perfect song to sign off with, and I started to use it more and more. I was very fortunate. Little did Hugh Charles know when he wrote it what a huge success it would be — even young people today know the words. He was one of the old school, when lyrics were lyrics.

Hugh Charles, songwriter and impresario, born July 24, 1907; died October 6, 1995

Weekend Birthdays

JUST after this year's spring weekend of VE festivities, some Spectatorish chap was shaking his head about how Britain had decided to celebrate 50 years of peace. *Cliff Richard*, he muttered: we'd had half a century in which Europe was divided, reconstructed, rejoined, the British empire floated away, and what do we get as history's equivalent of the last night of the prom? Vera Lynn repeatedly *Meeting Again* and *Cliff Richard*. The reaction was affectionate and bemused: the Russians had marked the anniversary by stomping round Red Square in jackboots with a missile accompaniment. It was far better that *Cliff* should have reprised *Summer Holiday*. Not even a rock copy, but a number wholly concocted in the British equivalent of US Tin Pan Alley (a place as cynical as the original but without its desperate energy), a chugging little song faintly welcoming a couple of weeks off nowhere particular doing nothing very much. How appropriate an anthem and performing style: the neatly-but-not-quite-US aspirations, the modestly improved standard of living. It must have been for bubbling *Summer Holiday* in remembrance that *Cliff*, 55 today, got his knighthood, rather than for the £25 million he's worth, the charities, the tennis and God, VR.

Today's other birthdays: Lord Baden-Powell, vice-president, Scouts Association, 93; Dr Peter Cook, director, British Geological Survey, 57; Prof John Kenneth Galbraith, economist, 87; Mario Puzo, novelist, 75; Arthur Schlesinger, US historian, 78; Baroness Serota, penal reformer, deputy speaker, House of Lords, 78; David Trimble MP, leader, Ulster Unionists, 51; The Duchess of York, 36.



Tomorrow's birthdays: Lord Baden-Powell, vice-president, Scouts Association, 93; Dr Peter Cook, director, British Geological Survey, 57; Prof John Kenneth Galbraith, economist, 87; Mario Puzo, novelist, 75; Arthur Schlesinger, US historian, 78; Baroness Serota, penal reformer, deputy speaker, House of Lords, 78; David Trimble MP, leader, Ulster Unionists, 51; The Duchess of York, 36.

Death Notices

LITTLE, Tom, well known gardener and music critic in the North East died peacefully in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 8th October 1995 aged 82 years. He will be greatly missed by family and friends. The funeral is at the Westgate Crematorium on Friday, 10th October at 2pm. No flowers. Donations to Alzheimer's Association.

STOCKMAN, David, died of cancer peacefully on 8th October aged 83 in the Royal Free Hospital. Greatly loved father, brother, friend and teacher. He suffered with cancer, epilepsy and good humour and will be deeply missed. Private funeral at 1.30pm, 10th October followed by a celebration at Leazes Road, Newcastle. No flowers. Donations to any cancer research or charity.

Birthdays

MARGARET HANNAH is to celebrate All our love, love and affection. My darling husband is 89 today. Love you forever. Write your announcement telephone 01753 511 8000.

ROBERTS, Tony, my darling husband is 89 today. Love you forever. Write your announcement telephone 01753 511 8000.

Face to Faith

Why cults aren't so crazy

Mike Stuer

FINDING anyone who has a good word to say about cults is like finding a Presidential candidate who "inhaled". Whenever a supposed cult is uncovered, journalists produce a fine blend of amazement, horror and fascination. Is it a collective revenge against those who have dared to escape the gravity-system of pension plans and mortgages?

What does labelling something as a cult really tell us about how it felt for the individuals involved? Cults might better be named "intense quasi-religious movements". They can easily be explained from two uncontroversial premises: one, that everyone needs the identity of "belonging" somewhere; the other, that everyone's searching for what Marghanita Laski called "everyday ecstasy".

The impersonal structures of Western society tolerate only commercial imitations of either "belonging" or ecstatic experience.

Part of the establishment's uneasiness is that slumbering within each of us is a dream that with only a small exertion we could organise society on lines of justice and compassion. For this reason anyone suggesting that the status quo is a distortion of human potential must be dumped in as deep a hole as possible so that the power elite can get on with its business of insisting that there is no alternative to what it defines as normality.

On emerging into adulthood we suddenly see all this with dreadful clarity, and we're overwhelmed with an urge to fight what threatens to engulf us. Hence Greenpeace. Hence Voluntary Service Overseas. Hence, once upon a time, socialism.

Hence, the appeal of "intense quasi-religious movements".

In 1971 I saw an item on the television news about a group of American Jesus freaks in a disused factory in Bromley and was struck by the interviews. They were 'nerds in Jesus Loves Me T-shirts but complete individuals.

I went over to check them out and stayed. These were The Children of God, later known as The Family of Love. There was a radical charisma to these old-young people which was intensely beautiful. They'd been through hell and they'd found heaven.

Whether you consider their determination to live absolutely by the Christian Gospel an illusion or not, such total and unflinching commitment created around them a coherent joy and a delight in spiritual community which remains for me a benchmark of what human beings are capable of.

The top priority was "living in the spirit". This was not high, glibly or stupid, but joyful, alert and fully-conscious. Artificial stimulants were simply not required.

Although we were always short of funds, whatever was necessary always arrived. We renovated the house without money. Literally. People would spontaneously give us goods and money. A cynic would say it was impossible, but I'm reporting what I saw.

Each day a group went out witnessing, singing original songs with gypsy guitars and selling leaflets and tapes. People would be attracted, even converted, by the sheer charisma of the fact that we visibly lived life without a safety net. Those great masters Christ and Buddha told their true followers to live without possessions because they knew of that energy in the universe which responds to those who truly abandon themselves to it.

The simple vegetarian meals were taken in silence at the scrubbed table, with someone reading from the Bible or the leaders' "Mo Letters". (The leader, David Berg called himself 'Mo' — the Mo-

ses of a new Exodus.) It certainly wasn't a democracy. The atmosphere was pioneer Americana, a rigorous self-discipline close to the archetypal values of Puritanism yet operating through inner illumination, not external constraints.

Was it fanciful? or deluded? Yes, but it was an era of hope, when it seemed possible we might actually create a new and just society.

So why then did I leave after eight months? I needed to explore my own contradictions before such selflessness could feel true for me.

Thinking back on this experience I'm willing to bet Sheffield's Nine o'clock Service was brought down not because of any sexual peccadilloes (the church has never lacked those) but because it was in danger of actually changing something. For a

moment the status quo's facade tottered, the "control systems" had failed, and all those who earn their living from it rushed to its aid with the oldest trick in the book — sexual innuendo.

It is Authority's favourite weapon against dissidents and works for exactly the same reason: journalists were about members of cults as if they weren't quite human. Once an Authority puts out the official

line on a subject, no matter how transparently false, there is rarely anyone with sufficient insight, courage and reason to defend what has publicly been labelled deviant.

Until we, society, can allow people to be different we shall go on having cults. And go on being amazed, horrified and fascinated by them.

Mike Stuer is a writer and broadcaster

Doonesbury



BY GARRY TRUDEAU

MoneyGuardian

Small fry swallowed up as big fish dangle the bait

Teresa Hunter

TAX cuts promised at this week's Tory Party conference could prove small change when the massive bonanza in bonuses set to accompany the merger of the financial services world comes on stream.

The latest mega-merger between Lloyds and TSB may well trigger a fresh round of mergers and flotations. Norwich Union yesterday raised the hopes of 2.5 million policyholders when it announced it was considering abandoning mutual status and converting to a public company. Policyholders could receive bonuses or shares worth £2,000 if the plan goes ahead.

It will not be long before millions of policyholders with other giant insurance mutuals such as Standard Life, Equitable Life, Scottish Widows, Friends Provident, Scottish Amicable and Clerical Medical start clamouring to join the jamboree. Others may already be wondering whether it is too late to jump aboard the bandwagon by opening insurance policies.

National & Provincial Building Society's 1.3 million members will be told on Monday that they will receive Abbey National shares worth £500, plus an additional cash or share bonus for investors of more than two years, if they approve the Abbey takeover plan. Anyone with £100 in a share or mortgage account on April 28 will qualify.

Norwich Union has still to decide whether to sell the company, what form a flotation would take and who would benefit. In theory, policyholders are the owners of mutual insurers — and only such members should benefit from any flotation. But defining membership is a more complex matter with a mutual insurer than with a building

What the banks do best

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☐ Competitive interest rates for small savers;
☐ Attractive Tessa.

LLOYDS
☐ Best buy student account;
☐ Small business service;
☐ Private banking service;
☐ Competitive mortgages through the C&G;
☐ Registrar and stock-broking service.

society. Anyone who has a life policy with the word "life" in the name of the contract ought to qualify.

This should include most life, pensions and annuity products. It may also include some unit trust investments — but would exclude personal equity plans. Norwich Union's 1 million policyholders would also be disqualified.

Three distribution schemes appear to be on the table. Norwich Union could float the company via a public share issue, and redistribute cash to qualifying members. This could be done by adding bonuses to policies at the date of flotation, at maturity, or by a distribution of cash.

Alternatively, the insurer could follow the Abbey National blueprint of offering free shares to its members, with an option to buy additional allocations. Finally, it could redefine its membership to include motor and household policyholders, and give free shares to all.

Cashing in on the sell-off of a mutual insurer will never be as simple as jumping aboard a building society conversion — but the true speculator may not be deterred. To qualify for a pay-out, a Norwich Union policy must run for a year. Given that the flotation plan is in its infancy, that may not be an insurmountable barrier.

Anyone tempted to start a Norwich Union policy should

remember that, unlike building society investments, these cannot be withdrawn in the short term without financial penalties.

This will not stop some investors from eyeing the mutual insurance sector as the next hot spot. Certainly small but financially strong insurers such as Scottish Provident will prove attractive takeover targets. Others, such as NPI or Scottish Life, could find themselves vulnerable to takeover. Provident Mutual has already admitted defeat and is recommending that its policyholders agree to sell their company for a paltry £50 per policyholder.

But many of the smaller mutuals, such as the National Farmers Union or the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses, are either too small or too specialised to consider either flotation or takeover.

Lloyds Bank can only offer the promise of a better service to TSB customers, as the bank was floated nearly a decade ago. TSB customers have been reassured that initially the bank will remain a separate company within the Lloyds group, with its own set of products.

TSB customers can only hope that Lloyds will become the focus for small savers — which has been the preserve of the TSB since 1971 — when it becomes Britain's biggest bank.

Money Guardian was edited by Teresa Hunter this week



UK funds steady despite falls in hi-tech sector

Ian Wylie

INVESTORS riding out this week's stock market roller-coaster ride should brace themselves for further volatility with a general election moving ever nearer.

Sharp falls in the value of hi-tech stocks were to blame for this week's jitters on the world markets, although merger fever finally repaired the damage. Profit warnings from Novell and Motorola caused the share prices in other computer and mobile phone companies to plunge and knocked more than 50 points off the FTSE 100 index.

Collective investments did not escape: investment trust shares fell by an average 1 per cent, while technology unit trusts took some of the biggest hits. The price of units in the Prolific Technology fund, for example, fell by 20p while HTR's Global Technology unit trust lost 6p.

These funds are notoriously volatile, and therefore to be avoided by cautious or first-time investors. UK funds are a more obvious choice and, not surprisingly, they form a sizeable chunk of the 80-plus funds in the Guardian Investment Challenge. Unit and investment trust managers have pledged to invest £50 per month in their funds for three years, after which all proceeds will go to children's charity Barnardo's.

Compared with hi-tech funds, unit and investment trusts which concentrate on UK equities and gilts offer investors a smoother ride. Over the past five years, for example, Schroder's UK Enterprise unit trust turned a £100 investment into £283.84. The fund invests in a small number of established UK companies with the aim of achieving capital growth.

Among the investment trusts, Fleming's Claverhouse fund is another strong performer, turning £100 into £228.43 over five years. The fund invests in medium-sized UK companies, which it believes grow faster as the

The Guardian Investment Challenge



recovery matures. UK funds are sub-divided into several sectors to give a better indication of their objectives. Trusts in the UK Growth sectors must invest at least 80 per cent of their assets in equities which aim for capital growth, while UK Income sector funds go for strong yield. A combination of both growth and income is offered by the UK General funds.

Average returns on investment trusts have been higher than those on unit trusts over the last 10 years, but investment trust performance has also been more volatile. Unit trusts are funds with an unlimited number of units on offer, and the fund managers are obliged to buy back units. The fund manager either issues or cancels new units according to investor demand.

By contrast, investment trusts are companies in their own right, which allow investors to buy a limited number of shares. The price of these shares moves up and down in value like the shares of any other company.

From the middle of next year, unit trust managers will be obliged to show the effect charges can have on investments. Under new rules published this week by the Personal Investment Authority, investors must be told of the initial and ongoing charges in cash terms and given an example of how the charges build up over time.

Now houses of ill repute are in red line districts

Chris Jones

THE practice of "red-lining", whereby lenders will not provide mortgages for houses in areas they deem undesirable, came under fire this week after a building society rejected an application from a woman who wanted to buy her council flat.

Bradford & Bingley Building Society refused the £10,500 mortgage request after a local surveyor decided that the location of the flat in Chapeltown, Leeds, an area "closely associated with prostitution and drug abuse", would "severely restrict saleability".

According to the society, the valuer, who had decided that the house could never be resold because of its location, had "acted over-zealously". The society, which has 850

mortgage holders in Chapeltown, said that red-lining is not practised when processing a mortgage application.

Undesirable locations are held on file by insurers, who classify high-crime areas into risk groups. By "cherry picking", or refusing people who apply for cover in high-risk areas, the insurer reduces the possibility of having to pay out on a claim. But it also reduces the prospect of getting a mortgage, as lenders are unlikely to advance funds on an uninsurable property.

But there is increasing evidence that concerns about being able to resell repossessed properties are leading lenders to be more selective about the areas they will mortgage.

Areas which are widely considered problematic include Ardwick and Salford in Manchester, Broad Green and

West Darby in Liverpool as well as Hackney and Bethnal Green in London.

Lenders rely heavily on the valuer's opinion before approving an application for a loan. These usually base their decisions on factors such as the borrower's ability to repay or the condition of the building.

However, the location of the property can make it difficult to obtain a loan, as is the case with properties in high-subsidised areas. Bradford & Bingley, like many lenders, will not provide a mortgage for a house situated under power cables, even in an upmarket area.

Whether this tightening of lending criteria is itself holding back the housing market remains to be seen. Further weaknesses in the market were reflected by the latest report on negative equity pub-

lished this week by the Woolwich Building Society, according to which the number of homes worth less than the original loan taken out to pay for them increased by 90,000 to an estimated 1.13 million. The sharp increase of 190,000 over the year is due to the fall in house prices.

A UK construction company pledged this week that it would insure the value of its new homes against the threat of negative equity. Chester-based builder David McLean Homes has launched a scheme called Price Protection, which guards against home owners making a loss if they sell the property within three to 10 years after the original purchase. One-off premiums cost £87.50 for each £1,000 of cover, which is subject to a minimum of £25,000 and a maximum of £25,000. DTS General Insurance, which developed the

equity protection policy, has been approached by two major building societies and by builders around the country.

Despite what may seem like a gloomy outlook, the Building Societies Association has confirmed an increase in lending by societies. The group predicts a slow but certain recovery in the housing market as new mortgages from lenders show more commitment to home owners.

Telephone-based mortgage provider First Mortgage Securities has launched a new three-year mortgage fixed at 5.75 per cent on loans up to £150,000 with a maximum loan to value of 75 per cent.

A 100 per cent mortgage scheme is available from telephone mortgage specialists Colonial Direct. The maximum available is £100,000 and the loan is fixed at 8.99 per cent until August

2000. Chase De Vere has a two-year mortgage fixed at 4.49 per cent available for a maximum loan of £200,000 and has a maximum loan to value of 90 per cent.

A new variable-rate mortgage called Cashback Plus is available from the Woolwich Building Society. The mortgage offers a cashback of 3 per cent of the loan plus a discount of 3 per cent off the society's standard variable rate of 7.99 per cent. The loan is available up to a maximum of £200,000 and the maximum loan to value is 95 per cent.

Chelsea Building Society has announced five discount mortgages which include free redundancy insurance until the end of 1996. The mortgages range from a 5.75 per cent discount on the variable rate of 7.99 until January 1997 to a 1.25 per cent discount until January 2000.

Top funds over five years

UNIT TRUSTS	3 yrs	5 yrs	10 yrs	Fund voted
UK Equity Growth	£	£	£	500
Schroder UK Enterprise	195.52	293.84	—	3.82
M&G Capital	199.01	230.03	415.87	3.31
Scott Equitable Ethical	151.01	194.62	—	3.72
Mercury Recovery	152.67	165.34	293.75	4.24
TSB UK Growth	—	—	—	—
UK Equity Income	£	£	£	500
M&G Dividend	182.71	217.39	423.26	3.77
Framlington Extra Inc	174.95	216.75	452.60	3.67
Cler Med Eq High Inc	170.59	206.19	407.83	3.76
Govett UK Equity Inc	175.18	202.30	—	4.74
Lloyds Bank Inc	152.45	183.80	345.91	3.11
UK Equity General	£	£	£	500
Hambros Model Portfolio	162.79	220.16	—	3.51
TJ British	158.69	198.92	352.80	3.59
Scott Eq UK Blue Chip	151.32	190.70	—	3.64
Govett UK Safeguard	—	—	—	—
UK Balanced	£	£	£	500
BWD Balanced Portfolio	179.01	210.42	—	3.82
INVESTMENT TRUSTS	£	£	£	500
UK Income Growth	£	£	£	500
Fleming Inc & Cap	161.80	—	—	5.30
Schroder Income Growth	—	—	—	—
UK General	£	£	£	500
Fleming Claverhouse	149.35	229.43	470.18	4.86

Based on £100 lump sum invested on offer to bid deals with net income reinvested. Investment trust performance on mid-market basis. Source: Mitrapi.



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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Union springs fat cats protest

SHAREHOLDERS attending North West Water's extraordinary general meeting to approve the £1.4 billion bid for Norweb, were lobbied by members of Union, the public sector union, protesting at likely job cuts and directors' fat cat salaries. The meeting approved the bid and gave direction to go-ahead to change the group's name to United Utilities should the deal go through. Questions were asked about the impact of the takeover on jobs. Brian Staples, NWW's chief executive, said the board regretted that there would be job losses, but hoped to minimise the impact by natural wastage, retraining and job creation, especially in the non-regulated business.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS THOMSON



FTSE within whisker of record • Speculation has Schroders and Standard Chartered in the frame

Market eager for another banking bid

Patrick Donovan and Paul Murphy

THE City's conviction that another multi-billion pound banking bid is being assembled yesterday drove the FTSE index to within a whisker of its record high, with more than 27 billion added to the value of Britain's biggest 100 companies.

Shares across the financial sector led the way with interest whipped up by the week's surprise merger deal between Lloyds Bank and the TSB.

The FTSE 100 powered ahead by 44.2 points to close at

3568 — three points under last month's record.

Schroders, one of the City's few remaining independent investment banks, spurred 88p to 1368p on talk that it is being stalked by a foreign buyer. Standard Chartered, which has an enviable presence in Pacific Rim financial markets, firmed 30p to 518p.

There was talk of a Continental buyer coming in for Standard, although rumours also suggested a US banking giant, such as North Carolina-based Nationsbank, could be about to pounce.

Among the larger banks, HSBC — Midland Bank's parent company — rose 39p to

945p, although traders said the rise also reflected the strong performance of the Hong Kong market.

National Australia Bank is also in London actively looking for acquisitions, as disclosed by the Guardian earlier this week. It is interested in building retail market share in the south of England to complement its Yorkshire, Clydesdale (Scotland) and Northern (Northern Ireland) bank operations.

A spokesman for Schroders insisted there had been no approach. Any takeover would require the consent of the Schroder family, which holds more than 45 per cent of

shares through a web of family-owned trusts.

Standard Chartered was unable to comment, but is not thought to be on bid alert.

HSBC attributed its rise to technical market factors. Speculation persisted that HSBC could still be interested in intervening in the TSB-Lloyds merger despite this week's denial that it was planning a counter-bid.

At Royal Bank of Scotland, which was 20p up at 822p, a spokesman refused takeover speculation. "We have not changed our long-held strategic view that the interests of the shareholders, customers and staff are best served by us

remaining an independent financial services group."

Leading banking analysts yesterday were unable to harden the speculation, but the consensus was that another big banking deal was in the offing.

One well-placed source said NatWest had been looking at TSB and had been rumoured by Lloyds' merger announcement. The market is convinced that NatWest and Midland Bank need to buy more market share to compete in the fast restructuring retail markets. Several pointed to Abbey National as a likely target although the shares were only up 2p at 572p.

Another analyst said British retail banking can now expect the kind of merger mania which has swept investment banking.

● NatWest, which is to sell its US-based NatWest Bancorp operation, yesterday announced that the transatlantic retail banking business boosted its third quarter profits by 38 per cent to \$119.7 million.

● The Dow Jones soared 49.48 points to 4814.37 by early afternoon yesterday after US inflation rose by just 0.1 per cent in September and better than expected third quarter earnings from hi-tech companies.

Norwich Union seeks stock market float

Insurer to drop mutual status, reports LISA BUCKINGHAM

THE change sweeping over Britain's financial services industry reached a new landmark yesterday when Norwich Union, the country's second largest mutual insurer, said it was considering a stock market flotation.

A public listing for the company's shares could mean a cash or shares bonanza for the Norwich's 2.5 million policyholders, all of whom would have to vote on the change of status.

Chief executive Allan Bridgewater confirmed that the company was considering going public in a move which could bring a \$3 billion price tag and catapult it straight into the FTSE index of the 100 largest companies.

Although Mr Bridgewater stressed that no decision on flotation had been taken — and that there would be a complex technical and legal obstacles to overcome — he said directors were currently in favour.

"The preliminary view of the board is that this course of action would produce significant benefits to members of the Norwich Union and assist the overall development."

Flotation is unlikely to take place before 1997 but it would give Norwich Union a powerful financial firepower in a sector where the leading players are struggling to increase their share of business.

Even as a mutual, Norwich's management has

mounted takeovers in Britain and overseas. But analysts said flotation would allow the company to do bigger deals for shares rather than cash and would make international alliances easier.

It could also make it easier for the group to be acquired by a big bank.

Although other mutual insurers — such as Scottish Equitable have changed status — all have been taken over or joined forces with other groups. Norwich Union, with £35 billion of assets, will be the first to give up mutual status for an independent future.

The company, which is in the process of shedding more than 2,000 jobs, about a fifth of its UK workforce, has been hit by a fall in new business partly because of the sluggish market, and partly because the company was fined £200,000 and took its entire direct sales force off the road last year to be retrained after allegations of wayward tactics.

Norwich Union has a large portfolio of general insurance business in addition to life and pensions. Last year general premiums increased by 12 per cent to £1.6 billion, while life premiums were static at £2.7 billion.

But, in common with other large insurers, it is grappling with competition for Britain's building society is expected to announce on Monday a £500-plus windfall for its 1.3 million members with savings of more than £100 following the £1.35 billion takeover bid from Abbey National.

WH Smith warns of heavy provisions

Paul Murphy

THE City is bracing itself for another stock market crash.

Smith when management at one of the country's leading high-street retailers face shareholders next week.

The firm's annual meeting on Wednesday is expected to confirm that costs arising from a wholesale restructuring of the group and from the need to revamp many ageing stores will lead to heavy provisions this year.

There has been speculation that such an announce-

ment would include a new chief executive to replace Sir Malcolm Field, who is due to go next year. However, a full statement has been delayed.

The company stunned the City in May when it said that competition from supermarkets, who have moved into the business of offering discounted top-selling books and videos, would hit profits.

The damage was revealed in August when Smith axed 1,000 jobs, announced a boardroom shake-up and promised to rush through a refurbishment of its stores. Pre-tax profits for the year

to end-June fell from £125 million to £115 million.

The indications then were that profits would be affected during the first half of the current year, but Sir Malcolm refused to give any hint of the size of the fall.

With most analysts expecting profits of around £100 million this year, there was concern last night that any fresh provisions would lead to a rash of new downgrades.

Trading is known to have been affected by the hot weather during the summer, but there has also been talk of several problems at one of the group's key distribution centres in the South.

Just last month, speculation over Smith's trading position intensified as the

Net Book Agreement, which allowed publishers to fix retail prices, collapsed.

Smith announced that it would slash the price of scores of its best-selling titles, leading City followers to predict that, while the company might be able to maintain volumes, margins were bound to suffer in the short term.

The company has also been struggling to stabilise the loss-making Do It All chain, run as a joint venture with Boots.

Leeson sells story for £450,000

Dan Atkinson

ROGUE trader Nick Leeson has sold his side of the Barings bank story for nearly half a million pounds.

The deal was confirmed yesterday. The manuscript has been bought by publisher Little Brown in a deal covering British, US and Commonwealth rights.

Mr Leeson's ghost-written account of his role in the \$880 million Barings crash — the most compulsively readable story I've seen for many years," according to Little Brown UK managing director

Philip Harrison. She said the book — which concentrates on the two years prior to Mr Leeson's arrest — would embarrass a number of people.

The deal was closed at the weekend book fair in Frankfurt, just a few miles from the prison cell where the script's author awaits possible extradition to Singapore on charges connected with the Barings affair. The reputed \$450,000 will go, initially, towards legal bills, it is thought.

As reported exclusively in yesterday's Guardian, Ed Victor, literary agent to Mr Lee-

son, had also been in talks in Frankfurt with other publishers, including Hodder and Reed. The book, being ghosted by journalist Edward Whitley, is about half finished, and Little Brown plans to publish after Mr Leeson's trial.

Given that he is likely to be extradited to Singapore, where he will face a no-jury trial, that may not be too far in the future. Next Tuesday, Barings bondholders who want Mr Leeson brought to Britain for trial will decide whether to fight in the courts moves by the British Government to ensure Mr Leeson goes to Singapore.

Ironically, the Government's stance may help Mr Leeson keep earnings from his book and any film or serialisation rights. English law prevents a criminal profiting from his crime, but it is unclear whether this would apply to a conviction on essentially technical offences in the Far East.

Barings' administrators, Ernst & Young, are serving a writ on Mr Leeson as a "protective measure", claiming fraudulent or negligent misrepresentation, but a spokesman was unable to say whether they would pursue him for any book earnings.

Statoll poised to make long-awaited bid for Aran

Ian King

STATOIL, the state-owned Norwegian oil company, is expected to make its long-awaited counter-offer for Irish oil explorer, Aran Energy, on Tuesday, according to market sources.

Statoll, which has been planning its move since talks last weekend with Aran, is expected to offer between 75p and 75p a share for the company. It is understood the Norwegians hope to win a recommendation for their offer from Aran's board.

A bid of that size would value Aran, fighting a hostile bid from American oil giant Atlantic Richfield (Arco), at between £150 million to £200 million. Earlier this week, Arco raised its offer from 51p to 68p, in a move timed to flush out any rival bidders.

A leading City analyst attacked the length of time Statoll has taken to prepare its bid, and warned that the company risked paying "over the odds" to win Aran's backing. "Statoll would be crazy to pay more than a couple of pence a share for a management recommendation, but then

again, they're a nationalised company, and over-paying is the sort of thing they do," he said last night.

Meanwhile, Aran sent a note to shareholders yesterday urging them to support its joint exploration venture with Statoll in the Connemara field, to the west of Ireland. The move — widely seen as a "poison pill" — to a hostile bid — is due to be ratified at an extraordinary general meeting in Dublin on October 23.

In his letter, the Aran chairman, Michael Whelan, said: "Aran has an exciting future, and we strongly recommend shareholders to reject Arco's inadequate revised offer."

But Arco hit back, accusing Aran of a "blatant attempt to frustrate the due process" of its offer. Terry Dallas, Arco's vice-president and treasurer, said: "Our bid is the only one on the table. We now have to wait and see what Statoll decides to do, but if our offer is the highest or only one on the table at the end of the auction, shareholders should accept it."

In another day of hectic trading, in which nearly three million shares changed hands, Aran shares ended unchanged at 75p.

OFT threatens to revoke Colorvision licence after customer complaints

Tony May

THE Office of Fair Trading, in an unusual move, threatened yesterday to revoke Colorvision's consumer credit licence unless the consumer electronics retailer can prove it remains fit to offer credit to its customers.

Alan Tinger, Colorvision's managing director, said he was "amazed at the bizarre actions of the OFT" and he was confident that it and its 34 subsidiaries would retain their licences.

The OFT said the issuing of the "Notice to Revoke Licence" did not mean that the licences would be revoked, or that credit business could not continue in the meantime. Colorvision has 21 days to convince an adjudicating officer of its soundness.

Losing the licences would be a heavy blow as the group does 40 per cent of its business — some £30 million of sales a year — on credit terms. The news wiped 17 per cent off the stock market value of the Liverpool-based company to leave it

with a price tag of £7.9 million.

An OFT spokesman could not remember the last time such a notice had been issued to a publicly-listed company. It issues about 94 such notices a year, many to car dealers.

Mr Tinger said Colorvision's local advertising stressed the group's part-payment credit terms. "Many customers seem to think we are a rental chain," he said.

The group would be conducting a detailed review of 43 customer complaints highlighted in talks with the OFT and planned to mount a strong defence. The group, which regularly dealt with more than 4,000 customers per week, had discussed 30 complaints with the OFT in 1993. These had been received by local trading standards officers between November 1989 and November 1993.

It did not know of any further complaints until Thursday when the OFT told it of a further 13 customer complaints received between December 1993 and December 1994.

Notebook

Twin tax strategy for the ballot box



Alex Brummer

OFFICIALLY, of course, the Chancellor is in purdah before the November 28 Budget. There has, nevertheless, been no shortage of taxation clues this week from Kenneth Clarke and the Prime Minister in their party conference speeches. The fiscal framework is being built around the so-called 40 per cent rule — in which the central government spend of a prudent administration is kept to below 40 per cent of GDP.

This looks like a tough target to achieve when one looks at the basic numbers, although it would not be that difficult to finesse the number downwards by excluding the contingency reserve and/or local authority spending. In fact, on OECD measures, the UK was almost there in 1994 (40.6 per cent) and certainly in far better shape than some of our main trading partners.

On the tax side of the equation, the strategy is becoming clearer, too. The Chancellor, speaking extemporaneously at the IMF in Washington, indicated that it was the marginal rate of income tax — the Tory goal is to bring it down to 20 per cent — which was in his sights. However, current levels of public spending and borrowing will not allow him to do this or to begin to chip away at capital gains and inheritance taxes — two of the Prime Minister's favourites.

Judging from Mr Clarke's own words at Blackpool, he may adopt the practice of his predecessor, Norman Lamont, and go for a time-release capsule approach. Mr Lamont used this device to make public the bad news early in 1993, gaining the maximum advantage from the City.

Such an approach would allow Mr Clarke to take the credit now for the tax cuts to come and give him scope to provide a further pre-election sweetener in November 1996, if the PSBR is healthy. Plainly, Mr Clarke's boss would like him to chip away at inheritance and capital gains taxes. The former is relatively straightforward and enough of an irritant in the shires — with its uneven impact — to make it a political winner. It would cost the exchequer around £1.4 billion in a full year — a little less than one penny off the basic tax rate.

Capital gains tax is far more difficult technically, even though less costly at around £1 billion a year. At present it is a useful deterrent to people converting income to capital, a wheeze which was common when income taxes were much higher before the Thatcher era. And the Inland Revenue would put up a fight.

But if that is what Mr Major believes will win him votes in Middle England, it will almost certainly happen. The eventual revenue loss, though, could be far greater than the take from capital gains tax.

Norwich retreat

THE decision by the Norwich Union to explore a public quote throws an interesting light on the difficulties being faced by Britain's life companies. Whereas building societies, like the

Halifax, Leeds, have sought to change their mutual status from a position of strength, the Norwich and other mutual life companies are in a much weaker position.

The mutual insurers are the victims of the far-reaching changes in the UK's financial sector. The belated arrival of full disclosure of commission structures and surrender values — as a result of work done by the regulators the OFT and the SIB — has meant the marketing of with-profits life policies and endowments that much more difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, the private pension transfer scandal has cast a shadow over this sector of the marketplace, too.

As importantly, the mutuals have been hit by changes in the distribution network. Tougher regulation by the Personal Investment Authority means that the network of independent financial advisers has been whittled down and is shrinking. Moreover, the arrival of bancassurance — symbolised this week in the proposed takeover of TSB by Lloyds — has provided a strong and highly-competitive distribution channel unavailable to the life mutuals.

This raises the question as to why Norwich Union thinks it will be able to do any better as a public company. There is no reason, for instance, why — as a mutual — it could not develop improved distribution deals with high street providers or enter the direct selling market by telephone.

Sure, the pressure of being a public company may make the Norwich Union's management more alert to trends. And no with-profits policyholders are any more likely to object to a share distribution than the members of a building society. Although it has to be said that there is a better, if rather arbitrary, tradition of mutuals sharing out profits through bonuses than there has been with the societies.

It may well be that the best reason for the Norwich to float is to make itself more marketable as a company. Experience shows, and the Abbey National has had some experience of this, that absorbing mutuals can be an incredibly laborious process.

By going public the Norwich could hope to become a more efficient bidder — for, say, a building society — or the target for a cash-rich bank looking to build its product range.

Banking bubble

AFTER Sir Brian Pitman's bold bid to expand into retail banking, Britain's second-life banks increasingly look like attractive targets — with Standard Chartered and Royal Bank of Scotland enjoying a sharp run-up in price in the commercial banking sector.

Certainly, size is again becoming fashionable in global commercial banking as seen recently with the Chase Chemicals deal in the US and the advance of NationsBank. Among those UK banks thought to be seeking expansion is HSBC, mentioned in the Standard Chartered context, although this could be frowned upon in some Asian markets. A US suitor is more credible. A purchase of Royal Bank, however, would also give HSBC a further niche in the US, something it has been looking for.

The City appears to be calculating that it may be easier to pass the competition barriers now, with an election a year or so away, rather than incur political risk closer to 1997.

News in brief

OFT considers Greenalls' bid

The Office of Fair Trading said it will consider whether to refer Greenalls' £518 million bid for rival pubs group, Bodingtons, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission after the deadline for representations on October 27. The takeover would create Britain's biggest pub chain.

Video group cash call Rhino Group, the struggling video games retailer, yesterday launched a £9 million rights issue, after announcing a £5.8 million pre-tax loss for the first half of the year, against £1.6 million last time. News of the cash call sent the shares down 1½p, to 11p, against the 5p rights price.

Sub named Vigilant Britain's third Trident submarine will today be named Vigilant at the VSEL shipyard

Samsung switches HQ

Korean electronics group Samsung is moving its European headquarters and training centre to London from Frankfurt. It will build offices at Hounslow, west London for 500 staff by the year 2000. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh yesterday visited Samsung's new North-eastern plant at Billingham, Cleveland.

Black buys 7m shares Telegraph owner Conrad Black has exercised an option and bought a further 7 million shares in the paper at 450p a share. This takes his stake to 63.33 per cent, from 58.2 per cent. The shares were bought from the trusts controlled by the original Telegraph owners, the Berry family.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

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Austria 15.15	Greece 350.00	Netherlands 2.4000	Spain 165.00
Belgium 44.20	Hong Kong 11.97	Norway 2.33	Sweden 10.04
Canada 0.52	India 33.25	Portugal 228.00	Switzerland 1.75
Cyprus 0.9975	Ireland 0.95	Saudi Arabia 5.96	Turkey 75.00
Denmark 8.42	Israel 4.71	Singapore 2.20	USA 1.5400
France 7.25	Italy 2.470		

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Russia house could still be put in capitalist order

COMMENTARY/ Moscow has travelled a long way towards the market, but may still take a wrong turn, argues WILL HUTTON

EVERYBODY knows the Russian story. The country is irredeemably ungovernable and dangerous. Shock therapy organised by free market economists has caused output to collapse. Mafia capitalism is in the making. President Yeltsin is added with drink and government is at best erratic at worst irrational. In the wings stands a mad nationalist right, ready to win power in the December parliamentary elections by capitalising on massive popular discontent.

That's the story — but there's another, more optimistic, tale that is going untold.

For despite the chronic mistakes of the band of zealots who wanted to swing Russia from a planned economy to an atomised free market in a few short years, there are now signs that the situation is not merely stabilising, but beginning to improve. At the annual meeting of the IMF in Washington last weekend, the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries allowed themselves to congratulate the Russians on what they had

achieved. The previous week, an OECD report predicted that Russian national output could jump by as much as 10 per cent next year. Something is afoot. Part of the explanation is that no economy can go into free fall forever. Since 1990 national output has nearly halved, with most of the losses in the old military-industrial complex. Ultimately there had to be some stabilisation, especially as Russia's exports of oil, gas and timber have begun to pick up.

One of the most intriguing developments has been the gradual build-up of a strong Russian trade surplus, and with it, confidence that the rouble is no longer worthless — prompted by the improving performance of inflation.

Only three years ago, after communist price controls were removed from all but essential goods, Russia stood on the brink of the kind of hyperinflation that in Germany in the 1920s had set in train the rise of Hitler. It wasn't difficult to be gloomy. But since then the inflation rate has fallen. According to Russian Economic Trends, in

August it stood at a new low of 4.5 per cent per month (over 50 per cent annually). More importantly, the government is no longer printing money to pay its bills — a form of finance which even a diehard Keynesian has to concede is inflationary. It is in control of spending, and despite massive tax avoidance, revenues are keeping pace. So the budget deficit is narrowing, with the budget for 1996 projecting a deficit that will be, proportionately, around British levels.

Furthermore, the privatisation programme has been remarkable. More than 80 per cent of the industrial workforce now works in privatised enterprises, and 75 per cent of the country's small business sector is in private hands. Russia is potentially a formidable industrial power. Its reserves of raw materials and energy are second to none. It remains the world's leading producer of steel, aluminium, copper and synthetic rubber. In aerospace and space engineering its technology is at the frontier of scientific knowledge. If the economy were to come good, it would be a formidable competitor.

But to achieve that, Russia has to overcome two obstacles. First, although there is general recognition that there is no going back, there is no consensus about the way forward.

The reformers, although brave, are wedded to a laughably ideological conception of capitalism. Russia badly needs a more institutional and cultural underpinning to its market economy and a more subtle understanding of the interplay between government and economy than that professed by the young reformers. And that is lacking. Second, as a result, the political situation is chaotic. No party is able to assemble a coalition behind a plausible political and economic philosophy. The nationalist right is on the wane. The new Communists and the Agrarian Party are gaining ground, but they are more united by what they are against than what they are for. If they gain a parliamentary majority in the December elections they will be oppositional rather than constructive.

Yet the Russians have travelled far. With the right policy moves — for example, constructing stable share ownership patterns, a social security system, a long-term industrial banking system and continuing a tight fiscal policy — the country could emerge as a capitalist supercompetitor. It is a tantalising prospect. And it would be typical of Russia to kick it away just as it became possible.



Volume production... Frankfurt International Bookfair keeps its doors open to Monday

PHOTOGRAPH: HERBERT PROEPPER

Rivals call for EC ban on cheap Iberian drugs

Adela Gooch in Madrid

A EURO-ROW has broken out over a request from France and Germany for the European Commission to renew a ban on exports of drugs produced in Spain and Portugal to the rest of the union.

The ban, which has been in place since Spain and Portugal joined the then Common Market in 1985, expires at the end of this year, but French and German companies argue that their Iberian counterparts are still in a position to flood the European markets with drugs at as little as half the price of their equivalents produced elsewhere.

The crux of the row lies in the patenting system used for new drugs. Until recently, under Portuguese and Spanish law, a laboratory could virtually copy a drug marketed after years of expensive research by a foreign company and still be issued with a patent. The patent covered the process rather than the drug itself — a minimal change in the amount of one of the components was enough to argue that the manufacturing process was different and hence receive a patent.

In 1992, Portugal and Spain reformed these laws prompting the EC to agree to remove the ban after a three-year adjustment period. But the

French and German pharmaceutical companies now claim that period was not long enough and that many drugs patented and produced under the old system in Spain and Portugal could still be successfully marketed abroad, providing unfair competition for their products.

The price differential has widened even further after successive devaluations of the Spanish peseta and Portuguese escudo. Patents on drugs produced in other European countries grant protection against copying for 10 years to ensure that a company which incurs the cost of developing a new drug has a fair chance to reap the financial benefits.

Although the Spanish pharmaceutical industry is fighting the ban officially, unofficially the situation is complicated by the fact that some Spanish and Portuguese laboratories have been taken over by multinationals and would not wish to compete with the parent company.

Germany and France have asked the EU to invoke a rule in single-market policy allowing restrictions on EU members' imports which cause "grave and persistent economic damage".

The Commission is gathering information and it may be several weeks before a decision on whether or not to lift the ban is taken.

Paris gambles on remote third airport

Paul Webster in Paris

IN A gamble that some experts say could fail, the French government is to build a third Paris airport at least 60 miles from the capital because of saturation at Orly and Roissy Charles de Gaulle.

"Nowhere in the world is there an airport situated at such a distance from the city that it serves," a spokesman for the Aéroports de Paris said yesterday after a government announcement that plans to increase Roissy's capacity would be cut back.

"It is not clear whether the new development will end up as a regional airport, a transit airport or an entity in itself with proper terminals for international flights."

A decision on the site will be made when a report is submitted in December and could depend on a link-up with TGV super-speed train connections like those at Roissy. The landing zone could be situated north of Beauvais in Picardy or south of Chartres, both areas of flat farmland. But, whatever the decision, no one has any doubt that once the go-ahead is given that centralised government methods will steamroller objections.

Orly, south of the capital, and Roissy to the north, were each rushed through with the minimum of public consultation, and it is possible that the

third airport could be operating within 10 years. The urgency is echoed in a report by a former transport minister, Jacques Douffiaques, who feared that Paris's place as Europe's second busiest airline destination could be lost without a new development.

"If things are left as they are, Paris would lose about 20 million passengers by 2015," he said, predicting a passenger potential by then of between 78 million and 95 million, compared to 52 million today, and rising to 124 million in 2030.

Doubts on the soundness of the government plan by the Aéroports de Paris reflected disappointment that a 1984 proposal to build five landing strips at Roissy had been curtailed. Two new strips will be built, making four in all, but both will be much shorter than the present two in an attempt to stifle opposition over increased traffic from local residents.

The territorial development minister, Bernard Pons, promised to ban night flights and increase anti-noise landing taxes on airlines (equivalent to about a franc a passenger) by 20 per cent to pay for better sound proofing measures on the ground. But the plan to spend nearly £200 million on the two new landing strips has not quietened local residents' fears that nuisances will increase.

Publishers enter the record books

Frederick Studemann in Frankfurt

AS VISITORS gathered in Frankfurt this week for the world's largest book fair, the industry found itself with something to celebrate.

Despite high prices for paper, and the growth of electronic media, the world's publishing industry is expanding healthily. Turnover rose last year across the world, outpacing inflation in most countries.

In the UK turnover was up 4.3 per cent, while the US and Germany recorded increases of 4.4 per cent and

3.5 per cent. Book production increased substantially, with Britain, where 87,000 new titles came out last year, leading the world in the publication of new books.

Paperback sales were among the best performing sectors of the industry. In the UK, for example, they rose by 8.5 per cent, while the US saw a 12.4 per cent increase.

Sales of scientific and technical books have not been so encouraging, with publishers across the world reporting a slight stagnation in this sector, attributable in part to the growth of electronic media.

On the whole, the traditional book industry is now less worried about the threat from electronic media. In France, the only country for which exact figures are available, sales of multimedia products account for 7.5 per cent of turnover in the book trade. In the US, the largest market for new media, research shows the majority of multimedia involved in encyclopaedias and educational books. Publishers take this as indication that traditional book publishing and new multimedia products will be able to co-exist happily.

Paper prices, which have

increased by up to 50 per cent, are causing concern among publishers, who are having to reduce margins as increases cannot be wholly passed on to customers. According to a British study, paper prices will continue to rise until 1998.

A further worry is the continuing problem of copyright infringement, which is estimated to cost the publishing industry £5.6 billion worldwide each year. The industry hopes that agreements signed with former Soviet republics, China and countries in South-east Asia will bring an improvement to the situation.

Some old Soviet customs live on

MATTHEW BRZEZINSKI in Terespol-Brest meets a long line of lorry drivers who have no truck with the frontier spirit

CLOSE to the Polish-Belarusian border, pneumatic brakes hiss as large transport lorries shudder to a stop on the hard shoulder of the E30, the main road linking Moscow to Berlin.

A filthy tractor-trailer of Belgian registration is the latest to join the long queue waiting to be processed through customs.

It parks behind a convoy of shiny new lorries emblazoned with "Sovtransavto", the blue and white logo of Russia's largest trucking company. Nearby, drivers lounge in the fields that straddle the highway. A few kick a football. Several sleep or tinker in their cabs. Others head up the road in the hope of finding familiar faces and exchanging gossip.

No one here appears to be in a great hurry. That is because they know from experience they are not going anywhere fast.

The Brest border checkpoint is jammed solid with traffic for 30 kilometres, and they have three days to kill before it is their turn to enter Poland.

On the Polish side of Brest, the situation appears only

marginally better. There, a line of trucks 12 kilometres long waits to cross into the former Soviet Union.

To historians, Brest-Litovsk is best remembered as the site where Russia and Germany signed a peace treaty ending hostilities after the first world war. But to truck drivers and haulage company executives, the border town is synonymous with lost time and money at one of Europe's biggest permanent bottle-

necks. "This is ridiculous," said François Dumoulin, an independent lorry driver from Strasbourg, who was delivering designer-label cosmetics to Moscow. "No one is paying me to lose four days here."

Mr Dumoulin complained that the wait is made all the more difficult because there are no toilet facilities or drinking water for stranded travellers.

Indeed, one must step gingerly when walking around the littered roadside ditches.

Local entrepreneurs on both sides of the border are providing some needed services, ranging from food and drink to female entertainment

capacity to process 1,600 trucks a day, they are not keeping pace with the increasing demands of commercial traffic which rose by 30 per cent last year.

Polish authorities say they are cash-strapped. The total budget of the border guards is \$100 million (£63 million), barely enough to pay the personnel. Belarus is far poorer.

Some of the delays along the border are caused by strict Polish controls aimed at curbing trafficking activities by the Russian mafia.

At this crossing 5.2 tons of Afghan hashish destined for Germany was intercepted in 1993.

In another bust, half a kilo of Strontium 90, a low grade nuclear weapons component, was seized.

The smuggling trade flows both ways. Every year more than 100,000 cars are stolen in the West and smuggled into the former Soviet Union, many passing through under forged documents.

According to truck drivers, Belarusian customs officials are less motivated by uncovering smugglers than by supplementing their \$65-a-month wages with bribes. Those travellers who refuse to pay are subjected to time consuming searches.

Frustrated lorry drivers say they see no end to the congestion, but warn that if the situation does not rapidly improve, they will blockade the border in protest.



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First they came for the miners. Now, it's the turn of white-collar workers, report PAULINE SPRINGETT, PATRICK DONOVAN and LISA BUCKINGHAM

Culling of the clerks

THEY did not even say thank you. That is what really hurts 34-year-old Micky Thakur about the way she was sacked last week by NatWest. There was no pat on the back. No parting drink with a sympathetic manager. No recognition of the way she had graced her way up the hierarchy after joining the bank straight after A-levels in 1979.

Just a terse letter she discovered on her doormat last week when she returned to her home in Bexley, Kent, after a two-week holiday in Greece.

No wonder Ms Thakur, who earned £20,000 a year after winning a hugely sought after promotion to the bank's personal finance division, feels betrayed. Her ambition was to become one of the first female Asian bank managers and she had made it clear she was ready to be relocated if that helped keep her job. But all to no avail. And this led to last week's letter with the bald offer of an £18,000 pay-off.

"There wasn't even a line to say 'thank you'. I thought it was really insulting," she says.

But this is clearly the way things are now done in the ruthless jobs shake-up sweeping the financial sector.

Ms Thakur has her own depressing story. But she is just one of 110,000 full-time bank employees to lose their jobs over the past four years. Official figures from the British Bankers Association show that only about 370,000 are cur-

rently employed in the industry - down from a peak of 445,000 in 1990. These were staff who, like Ms Thakur, joined the big banks for "a safe and secure career". Instead, their livelihoods have been thrown into jeopardy by an extraordinary revolution in the workplace which seems to spell the end of the road for the clerical classes and much middle management.

It was clear this week that the cull is far from over when Lloyds announced merger terms with the TSB with the likely loss of up to 10,000 jobs. This is likely to be followed by another mega-merger in this profit-driven world where big is best, efficiency is all and the only winners are the directors with their ever-increasing pay packets and bulging share option packages.

This is a little noticed trend, which has huge political implications. For it is steadily putting out of work large numbers of traditional Tory voters. What we are seeing here, as Labour's employment spokesman, Ian McCartney, perceptively points out, is the white collar equivalent to the closure of the coal fields.

As he says, the human cost of people like Ms Thakur has "just as devastating an effect on individuals and families" as anything suffered by the miners. Or shipbuilders or car makers. It seems that the clerical classes are finally being mowed down by the same market forces which have wrought such havoc amongst Britain's working classes and the tradi-



Moving picture... mergers and technology are costing commuters on London Bridge their traditional job security

PHOTOGRAPHS: GRAHAM TURNER

tional smoke-stack industries. It is made even harder for the victims to bear because the very directors who have been cutting back so relentlessly on staff numbers are themselves enjoying soaring salaries and ever larger option packages.

One of the biggest ironies of this week's Lloyds-TSB merger is that up to a dozen top directors have seen the paper value of their option packages soar because of the cost-saving benefits of getting rid of staff.

Decisions about any aspect of the bank's business can be made by one person and implemented at the touch of a button. Responsibility like that commands a £500,000 salary.

And for those that are left? Ironically, it would appear that the more technology develops, the faster what is left of the clerical sector becomes "deskilled". Instead of a career, the new-age bank clerk has a job. And because such a job demands relatively little training and little chance of career development in a world without middle management, it hardly offers a lifetime's employment.

Indeed, it seems inevitable that banks will increasingly favour younger and cheaper recruits. These are ideal breeding grounds for the kind of unspoken ageism which makes it so hard for the over-forties to find work. It has already started to happen. Barclays, for instance, has taken on 3,000 agency staff during the past year to replace more costly full-timers.

We are seeing here yet another stage of a structural change in the workplace which is every bit as radical as the industrial revolution's impact on 19th century Britain. It

is a scenario vividly spelt out in Professor Charles Handy's seminal work *The Empty Raincoat*, in which he distils the pressures on modern management into the formula: "Halve the number of managers in the core business in five years' time, pay them twice as much and produce three times as much productivity."

This formula, alas, is no longer academic. Such calculations have already reshaped the head offices of British industry, with dozens of the biggest FTSE names rationalising their headquarters and whittling away the decision-making cadre to a few dozen in a London office.

Other factors, too, are costing jobs in the financial services revolution. While information technology has

rendered obsolescent large swathes of clerical staff, its computer terminals and optic fibre cables have short-circuited the traditional reporting hierarchy through middle management. More job losses.

Then there is competition. The high street is "over-banked". And although last year the combined profits of the big four clearers bounced sharply up by £1.5 billion to £5 billion, this was due largely to a fall in bad debts. There was very little sign of any underlying growth in core lending. Like the manufacturing sector before it, the banking and finance industry is finding it cannot simply charge what it likes, often for a product no one wants.

So, slowly, with the introduction of such innovations as

interest on current accounts and 24-hour a-day telephone banking, the industry is having to haul itself closer to what consumers desire and are prepared to pay for.

Advances in technology have meant many of these improvements were introduced without increasing staff levels. Indeed, as profits are increasingly threatened by providing these "extras", banks have become even more determined to cut out any layer of "unnecessary" cost and, by and large, that has meant employees. Time was every bank had a manager and sub-manager. No longer. Through Britain, banks are "clustering" branches in chains of up to a dozen.

Out goes the traditional and expensive bank manager in every branch. Instead, traditional management functions are devolved by computer to a senior manager at a regional office.

As TSB chairman Sir Nicholas Goodison puts it: "The two main engines of change have been faster technological advances and the growing ascendancy of free-market thinking."

So where will it all stop? There is a bitter suspicion among unions and staff that this instinctively compliant workforce has been betrayed by its own management. Rory Murphy, general secretary of the 40,000-strong NatWest Staff Association, argues that the banks have taken advantage of a naturally docile workforce. He concedes that compulsory redundancies have not yet been the norm, but argues the banks have adopted a strategy of squeezing people out of work and forcing them to accept voluntary redundancy packages.



Micky Thakur... sacked by post after a holiday in Greece

Many staff, he says, fear that if they do not accept they will receive a much smaller payout if they are subsequently compulsorily axed. The result has been the decimation of morale. No longer is a job in a bank a career for life, a world where employees pride themselves on their office amateur operating association and branch darts league, a world where a bank worker would no more swap jobs than change allegiance to a local football team.

As Mr Murphy says: "The banks are not getting it right. Twenty years ago people were proud to work for a bank. Now it's not the sort of thing to admit in the pub. There are hundreds of staff who are demoralised and demotivated, who would like to leave."

Banking bazarre

Selected UK and Irish bank and building society purchases.

Year	Buyer	£m	Bought
1995	Abn-Amro	1,381	National & Provincial
1994	Lloyds Bank	1,800	Cheltenham & Gloucester
1992	HSBC	3,828	Mitland Bank
1991	Bank of Scotland	22	Bank of Wales
1990	allied Irish banks	111	ICI Northern Ireland
1989	National Australia Bank	877	Yorkshire Bank
1988	Alliance & Leicester	130	Gloucester
1987	National Australia Bank	420	Cypriot Bank, Northern Bank (Ireland)

* Subject to member approval

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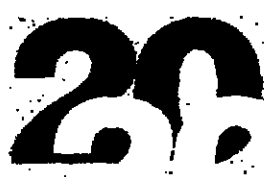
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Bottle seeks message



Nicholas Bannister

WE'VE seen the future... and it's here. Thus screamed the Fujitsu posters on the hoardings outside Telecom 95, the telecommunications industry's four-yearly exhibition and conference which has just ended in Geneva. "In touch with your future," echoed the France Telecom posters.

The slogans reflected the theme of Telecom 95—multimedia. Since the last gathering in 1991, the telecommunications industry has had to come to terms with the fact that technology can now deliver multimedia over their networks. But talk to people on any of the multi-million pound stands at Telecom 95 and you soon become aware of how divided the industry is over how to deal with multimedia, and especially the key issue of content.

In many of the quiet meet-

ing rooms above the stands executives were discussing who would provide the content for the services to be carried over their networks. The man they all agreed to talk to was probably have to work with, is Rupert Murdoch.

There seem to be three schools of thought among the telecom and cable company executives. The first is that they should have nothing to do with providing content, but should stick to what they know best and concentrate on delivering content produced by other people in the most efficient and cheapest manner.

The head of a big US phone company, who had previously been a film studio executive, said the different types of businesses needed very different types of management. Managers of a telecom group would stifle the creative skills of the programme or film makers like Steven Spielberg, who take bigger financial risks.

At the other extreme are the telecom companies which believe they have to have large production facilities of their own. Their greatest fear is that one or two people, especially Mr Murdoch, will corner the content market by taking over the big film and TV studios (and their libraries)

and buying the rights to the big sporting events.

They would then be forced to pay through the nose, either for the right to deliver other people's programmes or to buy programmes for their own network services. One telecom executive admitted he had nearly been "rolled over" by Mr Murdoch who, he said, had used his media expertise to identify key content areas such as sport years ahead of his rivals.

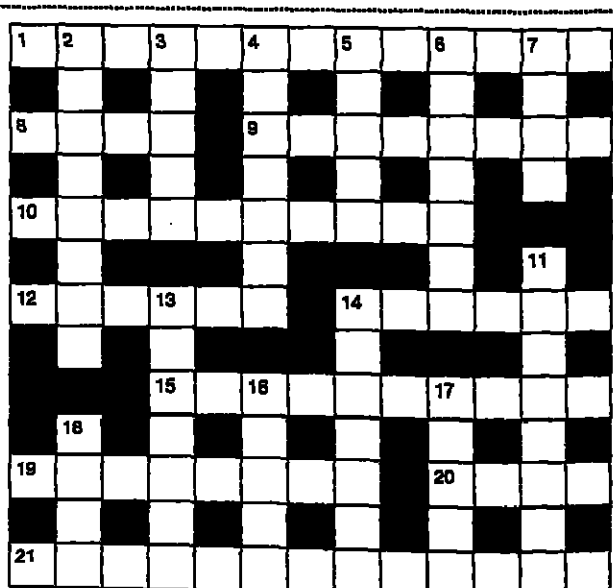
In the middle are the telecom companies which believe they have to have some involvement in providing content, but are unwilling to spend billions of pounds taking over a major studio. Fresh in their minds are the experiences of Sony and Matsushita, which spent billions of dollars buying Hollywood studios in deals which failed to fulfil their expectations.

The middle roaders believe they should own production facilities capable of producing around 10 per cent of their programming needs.

Despite the certainty of the slogans, executives are still struggling with their strategies and are reluctant to state publicly which is their preferred path. Ask them about seamless global communications however, and they will talk forever.

Quick Crossword No. 7945

Across
1 Instrument measuring radioactivity (6,7)
8 Reflection of sound (4)
9 Estrange (8)
10 Remark expressing admiration (10)
12 Cure (6)
14 Take place (6)
15 Sdr in mead (anag) (10)
19 Caught (8)
20 Placed in position (4)
21 Lord's, for instance (7,8)



Down
2 Surrounded (8)
3 Small band of musicians (7)
4 Truth (7)
5 Fruit, a source of oil (5)
6 Continuous (7)
7 Consumes — food (4)
11 Cancelled passage (8)
13 Stretchy (7)
14 With downcast, furtive look (7)
16 Code inventor — Dexter's (5)
17 Simultaneous firing (5)
18 Couple (4)

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